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THE
Bishop of *LONDON*'s
Second Pastoral Letter
TO THE
People of his Diocese.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Gibson (E)

THE

Biſhop of *LONDON*'s

Second Paſtoral Letter

TO THE

PEOPLE

OF HIS

DIOCESE;

Particularly, to thoſe of the two great Cities of *London* and *Weſtminſter.*

Occaſion'd by ſome late Writings, in which it is aſſerted, "That REASON is a ſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, without the Help of REVELATION.

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Occaſion'd by ſome late Writings, in which it is aſſerted, "That REASON is a ſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, without the Help of REVELATION.

THE Arguments that have been uſed to ſupport the Cauſe of Infidelity, may be reduced to two general Heads; one, That there is not *ſufficient Evidence* of the Truth and Authority of the Goſpel-Revelation; the other, That Reaſon being a ſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, there was no *Need* of ſuch a Revelation. The Tendency of the firſt is to perſwade Men to *reject* the Goſpel; and the Tendency of the ſecond, to ſatisfy them that they may without danger or inconvenience *lay aſide* and *neglect it*; and wherever

either of theſe Arguments prevails, the Work of Infidelity is effectually carry'd on.

To prevent your being ſeduc'd or ſhaken by any Suggeſtion that the Evidences of the Truth and Authority of the Chriſtian Revelation are not full and ſufficient, I endeavour'd in my firſt Letter to bring thoſe Evidences into as narrow a Compaſs as I could; that, having ſet them before you in one View and in their united Strength, you might be able to judge for your ſelves. And as a Chain of Evidences ſo plain and forcible, cannot fail to eſtabliſh every unprejudic'd Mind in a firm Belief that the Goſpel-Revelation was from God; ſo, when that is once eſtabliſh'd, no Suggeſtion either againſt the *Need* of ſuch a Revelation, or againſt our *Obligation* to receive it, ought to make any Impreſſion upon you; becauſe, to ſuppoſe that God makes a Revelation which is *needleſs*, is a direct Impeachment of his *Wiſdom*; and to affirm that we are not bound to attend to and receive it, when made, is no leſs an Impeachment of his *Authority*.

But ſince the Infidels of our Age are endeavouring to lead Men into a diſregard of all Revelation, by magnifying the Strength of Natural Reaſon, and recommending it as a full and ſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, and from thence infer, that the Means of Salvation directed by the Goſpel, notwithſtanding all the Evidences of their being God's own Appointment, are to be laid aſide as Superſtitions and human Inventions, and every Man is to have the framing of his own Religion; Since alſo there is great Cauſe to apprehend,

prehend, that many may give too favourable Entertainment to a Scheme which thus flatters the Pride of human Underſtanding, and which by leſſening or removing the Terrors of the Goſpel, ſhakes off the Reſtraints that are moſt uneaſy to the Corruptions of Nature : For theſe Reaſons, it highly concerns thoſe who have the Care of Souls, to guard them againſt ſuch fatal Errors; firſt, by convincing them of the Inſufficiency of Natural Reaſon to be a Guide in Religion and by Conſequence of the Need of a Divine Revelation and our Obligations to attend to it ; and then, by ſetting before them the peculiar Excellencies and Advantages of the *Chriſtian* Revelation, and the great Sinfulneſs of *Rejecting* it. Of theſe, and ſome other Points which naturally fall in with them, I will endeavour to give you a full and clear View, under the following Heads :

1. The true and proper Uſe of Reaſon, with regard to Revelation.

2. The Inſufficiency of Reaſon to be a Guide in Religion.

3. The great Need, and Expedience, of a Divine Revelation for that End.

4. The Obligation we are under to *Enquire* whether any Revelation has been made, and what Evidences there are of it's coming from God.

5. The

5. The Duty of Mankind to *Receive* for their Guide, whatever Revelation comes from God; and to receive it *whole* and *entire*.

6. The peculiar Excellencies of the *Chriſtian* Revelation.

7. The great Sinfulneſs and Danger of *Rejecting* this Revelation.

I. *Of the true and proper Uſe of Reaſon, with Regard to Revelation.* Thoſe among us who have labour'd of late Years to ſet up Reaſon againſt Revelation, would make it paſs for an eſtabliſh'd Truth, that if you will embrace Revelation, you muſt of courſe quit your Reaſon; which, if it were true, would doubtleſs be a ſtrong Prejudice againſt Revelation. But ſo far is this from being true, that it is univerſally acknowledg'd that Revelation itſelf is to ſtand or fall by the teſt of Reaſon, or, in other Words, according as Reaſon finds the Evidences of it's coming from God, to be or not to be ſufficient and concluſive, and the Matter of it to contradict, or not contradict, the natural Notions which Reaſon gives us of the Being and Attributes of God, and of the eſſential Differences between Good and Evil. And when Reaſon, upon an impartial Examination, finds the Evidences to be full and ſufficient, it pronounces that the Revelation ought to be receiv'd, and as a neceſſary Conſequence thereof, directs us to give up ourſelves to the Guidance of it. But here Reaſon ſtops; not as *ſet aſide* by Revelation,

tion, but as taking Revelation for it's Guide, and not thinking itſelf at Liberty to call in queſtion the *Wiſdom*, and *Expedience* of any Part, after it is ſatisfy'd that the whole comes from God; any more than to object againſt it, as containing ſome things, the *Manner*, *End* and *Deſign* of which it cannot fully comprehend. Theſe were the wiſe and pious Sentiments of an ingenious Writer of our own Time; 'I 'gratefully *receive* and *rejoyce* in the Light 'of *Revelation*, which ſets me at *Reſt* in 'many Things, the *Manner* whereof my 'poor *Reaſon* can by no Means make out to 'me. And elſewhere, having laid it down for 'a general Maxim, 'That Reaſon muſt be our 'laſt Judge and Guide in every Thing; he immediately adds, 'I do not mean, that we muſt 'conſult Reaſon, and examine whether a Propoſition reveal'd from God, can be made out by '*Natural* Principles, and if it cannot, that then 'we may reject it. But conſult it we muſt, 'and by it examine whether it be a Revelation from God, or no. And if Reaſon finds it 'to be reveal'd from God, Reaſon then declares 'for it, as much as for any other Truth, and 'makes it one of her *Dictates*. Which is in Effect what St. *Peter* means, when he commands Chriſtians to *be always ready to give a* Reaſon *of the* Hope *that is in them.*

Lock, Vol. 1. p. 573.

Lock, Vol. 1. p. 334.

1. Pet. 3. 15.

Agreeably to this, the Bounds of Reaſon and Faith are laid out by the ſame Writer, as follows: 'Reaſon (ſays he) as contradiſtin-'guiſh'd to *Faith*, I take to be the Diſcovery 'of the Certainty or Probability of ſuch Pro-'poſitions or Truths, which the Mind arrives 'at by *Deduction* made from Ideas which

Lock, p. 326.

'it

'it has got by the uſe of its *natural* Faculties,
'*viz.* by Senſation, or Reflection. *Faith* on
'the other Side, is the Aſſent to any Propo-
'ſition not thus made out by the Deductions
'of Reaſon, but upon the Credit of the Propo-
'ſer, as coming from *God* in ſome *extraordina-*
Lock, V. 1. p. 331. '*ry* Way of Communication.--- And again;
'*Reaſon* is *natural Revelation*, whereby the
'eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of
'all Knowledge, communicates to Mankind
'that Portion of Truth, which he has laid
'within the Reach of their natural Faculties;
'*Revelation* is natural Reaſon *Enlarged* by a
'new Set of Diſcoveries communicated by
'God immediately, which Reaſon vouches
'the Truth of by the Teſtimony and Proof it
'gives, that they come from God.--- And
Ibid. p. 329. 'elſewhere, 'Thus far the Dominion of
'Faith reaches, and that without any Violence
'or Hindrance to Reaſon; which is not injur'd
'or diſturb'd, but aſſiſted and improved, by
'*new Diſcoveries* of Truth, coming from the
'eternal Fountain of Knowledge.--- And,
Ibid. 'Whatſoever is divine Revelation, ought to
'over-rule all our Opinions, Prejudices, and
'Intereſts, and hath a Right to be receiv'd
'with *full Aſſent*. Such a Submiſſion as this,
'of our Reaſon to Faith, takes not away the
'Land-marks of Knowledge: This ſhakes
'not the Foundation of Reaſon, but leaves
'us that Uſe of our Faculties, for which they
'were given.

So little did this acute Writer dream of the new Notions which have been ſince invented, to ſupport the Cauſe of Infidelity,

'That

'That God cannot, conſiſtently with the *Immutability* of his Nature, make any *new* Revelation [tho' to *mutable* Creatures] by way of *Addition* to the original Law of Nature; 'That the making any ſuch new Revelation, would be to deal with his Creatures in an *arbitrary* Manner, 'That no Evidence from Miracles or other external Teſtimonies, upon which any new Revelation claims to be received as coming from God, are to be at all regarded; and, 'That the *Matter* of ſuch a Revelation is not to be attended to by any Man, further than *He* ſees the *Fitneſs* and *Wiſdom* of it, and can ſuppoſe it to be Part of the original Law of Nature; that is, it is not to be regarded or attended to at all, as a *Revelation*.--But this, by the way.

II. *Reaſon, of itſelf, is an inſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.* But before I proceed directly to the Proof of this, I muſt caution you againſt ſeveral fallacious Arguings upon this Point, by which you may otherwiſe be deceiv'd and impos'd on.

One is, the Arguing from the Powers of Reaſon in a State of *Innocence*, in which the Underſtanding is ſuppoſed to be clear and ſtrong, and the Judgment unbiaſs'd and free from the Influences of inordinate Appetites and Inclinations; to the Powers and Abilities of Reaſon under the preſent *corrupt* State of human Nature: In which, we find by Experience how often we are deceiv'd, even in Things before our Eyes and the common Affairs of human Life; and more particularly, in the Caſe of Religion, how apt our Judgment would be to follow the bent of our Paſſions and Appetites,

and

and to model our Duty according to their Motions and Deſires, if God had left this wholly to every one's Reaſon, and not given us a more plain and expreſs Revelation of his Will, to *check* and *balance* that Influence which our Paſſions and Appetites are found to have over our Reaſon and Judgment.

Another fallacious Way of Arguing is, that as Reaſon is our Guide in the Affairs of this Life, it may alſo be our Guide in Religion, and the Concerns of the next Life. Whereas in one, it has the Aſſiſtance of Senſe, and Experience, and Obſervation, but in the other, it is left in great Meaſure to Conjecture and Speculation. Or if Reaſon were *equally capable* of making a Judgment upon Things of a temporal, and Things of a ſpiritual Nature; yet there will always be a very great Difference in the Degrees of *Attention* which the Generality of Men allow to Things Temporal and Things Spiritual, to Things Preſent and Things Future, to Things in View and Things out of Sight. So that it is uſually ſeen, that the wiſer Men are about the Things of this World, the leſs wiſe they are about the Things of the next; and as to the Sufficiency of Reaſon to be a Guide in Religion, it is much the ſame Thing with Regard to the generality of the World, whether Reaſon be *Uncapable* of framing a compleat Rule of Life, or the Generality be hinder'd by Pleaſures or by Attendance on their worldly Affairs, from *Employing* their Reaſon to frame it; which will always be the Caſe of the greateſt Part of Mankind.

In the next Place therefore, it is very unfair in thoſe who deny the Need and Expedience of

of a divine Revelation, to argue in favour of Reaſon, as if all Mankind were *Philoſophers*, and every one had ſufficient Capacity, Leiſure and Inclination, to form a Scheme of Duties for the Direction of his own Life. For it is not enough to ſay, that there are learned Men in the World, who are *able* to form ſuch Schemes; ſince, whatever their own Ability may be, they have no Right to *command* Aſſent and Obedience from others; nor can any one rationally receive and embrace their Schemes without following them through the Chain of Reaſonings upon which they are built, and judging whether the Reaſonings will ſupport the Schemes; and further, (in caſe thoſe learned Men *differ*,) without judging, which of them is in the right, and which in the wrong: A Task, that the Generality of Mankind are as unequal to, as they are to the framing the Schemes themſelves. And the Difficulty is ſtill greater, when we find the ſame Philoſopher differing from himſelf; now advancing one Opinion, and then again leaning to another; at one Time *clear* and *poſitive*, at another Time *doubtful* and *wavering*, upon the very ſame Point; in which Caſe, his Opinion on either Side, can amount to no more in the Reſult, than to prove him a Guide very unfit for the People to follow.

No leſs unfair is it, to interpret the Zeal that is ſhown for Reveal'd Religion, as a *Diſregard* of Morality. This is ſo far from being true, that the Advocates of Revelation always conſider the whole Body of the Moral Law, as an eſſential Part of the Chriſtian Inſtitution; which is ſo far from having aboliſhed Morality, that it enjoins and enforces the Practice of it,

upon higher Motives, for more noble Ends, and to greater Degrees of Perfection, than any Scheme of *mere* Morality ever did; as will be ſhown more at large in this Letter. But at the ſame time it is laid down by them as an undoubted Truth, 'That God has a Right to preſcribe the Terms and Conditions upon which he will grant Pardon and Favour to Mankind, 'That he has fully and clearly declared in the Goſpel, what thoſe Terms and Conditions are, and, 'That therefore it is great Preſumption and a vain Hope to expect Pardon and Salvation in any other Way. And to ſay, in this View, that the Precepts of Morality, as the Product of mere natural Reaſon, are not a ſufficient Guide to Salvation, cannot with any Juſtice be call'd a *Diſregard* of Morality.

No more can the Reverence we pay to the Revelation of the Scriptures as a *divine* Direction, be call'd a Diſregard of *Philoſophy* as the Product of *natural* Reaſon. Perſons of Leiſure, Capacity and Attention, in any Age, might eaſily learn from Obſervation and Experience, that an immoderate Indulgence of the Appetites was hurtful to the Body and Eſtate, and a like Indulgence of the Paſſions equally prejudicial to the inward Peace of the Mind, and the outward Order and Regularity of the World. And while Mankind had no other Light, the Philoſophers employed their Time worthily, in drawing ſuch Rules from Reaſon and Experience, as, being duly obſerv'd, might make the preſent Life more happy, or rather, what was the great End they aim'd at, leſs miſerable. But then, as their Notions concerning another Life were at beſt confus'd and imperfect, and mere Reaſon could not inform them, with

with any Certainty, that this Life, with whatever befals us in it, is a State of *Tryal* and *Probation* in order to another; they could not tell how to make the Pains, Miseries, and Misfortunes of this World, turn to our Account; nor by Consequence could they lay a sure and solid Foundation of Ease and Comfort against all Events. The Considerations which Philosophy suggests, to support us under the Pressures and Calamities of Life, are such as these; 'That they are the common Portion of Mankind, 'That it is possible Time may alter Things for the better, 'That at worst Death will put an End to them, and, 'That Impatience in the mean time will but increase them. The Rules of Revelation are, 'That whatever befals us, is by the Appointment of a wise and good God, 'That he sees Afflictions necessary to wean us from the Love of this World, and to turn our Desires and Affections upon a much better, 'That he has promised either to deliver us from them, or support us under them, and by that has given us Ground for a full Trust and comfortable Hope in him; That our *Patience* under the afflicting Hand of God, is a fresh Endearment of us to him, and will be an Addition to our future Happiness, and, 'That in Point of Duration, the Sufferings of this Life are as nothing, when compared with an Eternity of Joy and Glory.

These, we say, are a much better Foundation of Ease and Comfort, than any Rules that the Philosophers either did or could lay down; but in saying this, we do not *condemn* the Rules of Philosophy upon that or other Points, nor discourage Persons of Leisure and Capacity from entertaining themselves with them, not

only as an agreeable Diverſion, but as an uſeful Exerciſe of the Mind; ſome Things in them being truly Great, and what we juſtly admire in *Heathens*, as tending to raiſe the Soul above the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of Earth. But then we ſay, that the Study of thoſe Writings is become uſeleſs and unneceſſary to the Generality of People, ſince Revelation has furniſhed us with Rules and Precepts, both Moral and Divine, which are far more perfect in themſelves, far more effectual for their ſeveral Ends, and eſtabliſh'd by a far higher Authority, than any of the Rules and Sayings of the Philoſophers can pretend to; and at the ſame time are plain and clear to the meaneſt Capacities.

This points out to us another Advantage which the Enemies of Revelation very unduly take, to advance the Strength and Power of natural Reaſon in Matters of Religion; and that is, the taking an Eſtimate of thoſe Powers from Books upon the Subject of Morality, that have been written *ſince* the Chriſtian Revelation was made; many of which are clear and uniform both in the Meaſures of Duty, and the Motives to the Performance of it. But this Clearneſs and Uniformity are really owing to the Light of Revelation, which has given us a far more exact Knowledge than we had before of the Nature and Attributes of God, from whence many of the Duties do immediately flow, and alſo a far greater Certainty of future Rewards and Puniſhments, as well as a clearer Conviction of the Neceſſity of Sobriety, Temperance, and other moral Virtues, as Preparations for our Happineſs in the next Life, by perfecting our Natures in order to it. And therefore to judge rightly how far Reaſon is able to be a Guide

in

in Religion, we muſt form that Judgment upon the Writings of ſuch of the ancient Philoſophers, as appear not to have had any Knowledge either of the *Jewiſh* or the Chriſtian Revelation; and then enquire, 'What Progreſs they were able to make in the Knowledge of Divine Matters, by the Strength of mere natural Reaſon, 'To what Degrees of *Certainty* concerning thoſe Matters it could and did carry them, 'What Agreement and Uniformity there was among them, in the main and fundamental Doctrins and Duties of Religion, 'What was the natural Tendency of their ſeveral Doctrins, in order to the promoting of Virtue and Goodneſs, and 'What Influence they had in their ſeveral Ages and Countries, in rectifying the Principles and reforming the Practices of Mankind. For all which Purpoſes, it is but Juſtice to them to ſuppoſe, that they had *as* great Strength of Reaſon and Judgment, *as* ſincere a Deſire to find out the Truth, and *as* great Diligence in enquiring after it, as any of the Enemies of Revelation at this Day can pretend to. And if it ſhall appear, 'That they were utterly ignorant of many important Points in Religion, which Revelation has diſcovered to us, 'That their Knowledge of many others was dark, uncertain and imperfect, 'That the Differences among them, in Points of the greateſt Weight and Moment, were endleſs and irreconcileable, 'That many of them taught Doctrins, which directly tend to promote Vice and Wickedneſs in the World, and, 'That in Fact the Influence they had in rectifying the Notions and reforming the Lives of Mankind, was inconſiderable; If, I ſay, theſe things appear, they will amount to a full Proof, that

natural

natural Reaſon, of itſelf, is not a ſufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.

1. The ancient Philoſophers were utterly ignorant of many important Points in Religion, which Revelation has diſcovered to us.

They were Strangers to the true Account of the Creation of the World, and the Original of Mankind, and to God's Adminiſtration of the World, and Intercourſe with Mankind, in the moſt early Ages. One Sect of Philoſphers held, that the World was *Eternal*, and another, that it was made by *Chance*; and they who believed it had a Beginning in Time, knew not by what Steps, nor in what Manner it was rais'd into ſo much Beauty and Order; and ſo, for want of a ſure *hiſtorical* Knowledge concerning this Point, it became a fit Subject for the *Fancy* and *Imagination* of the Poets.

Peripatetick's.

Epicureans.

They were ſenſible of a great Degree of Corruption and Irregularity in the Nature of Man, but could not tell from what Cauſe it proceeded, nor in what State our firſt Parents came out of the Hands of God, nor by what Means they loſt their original Perfection. And the want of knowing theſe Things, leads Men of courſe into endleſs Perplexities, how to reconcile the Purity and Perfection of God the Creator, to the Uncleanneſs and Corruption of Man the Being created; and tempts them to ſuppoſe, either that the Nature of God is not pure, or that the Soul of Man is not of a divine Original.

Much leſs could the Light of Nature acquaint them with the Method He has ordain'd and eſtabliſhed for the Recovery of loſt Man; 'to effect a Reconciliation between God and Man, 'to exerciſe his Goodneſs without the Vio-

Violation of his Juſtice, ' and not only to make the Pardon of Sinners conſiſtent with the Wiſdom of his Government, the Honour of his Laws, and his Hatred of Sin, ſo as to render their Salvation *poſſible*, but to give them the ſtrongeſt *Aſſurances* of Pardon and Favour, upon the plain Conditions of Faith and Repentance. Theſe are things that depend wholly upon Revelation; and without the Knowledge of theſe, Mankind muſt remain in a perplexed and deſponding State, as to the Pardon of Sin, and the Favour of God. The Comfort they would raiſe from the Mercy and Goodneſs of God is checkt by the Conſideration of his Juſtice, and nothing is able to fix the guilty Mind in a State of ſolid and well-grounded Comfort, but an Aſſurance that the divine Juſtice is ſatisfied, and an expreſs Declaration on the Part of God, upon what Terms and Conditions he will receive the Sinner into Favour.

Then as to the *Publick Worſhip* of God; the Light of Nature might in general ſuggeſt to Men the *Reaſonableneſs* of joyning in Worſhip; but in what manner he would be worſhipped, and in what way they might perform a Service that would be acceptable to him, was underſtood to be a Point which the Wit and Penetration of Man could not fix and determin. Inſomuch, that the Founders of States and Kingdoms, who undertook to ſettle *Civil* Adminiſtrations by the Rules of human Prudence, found it neceſſary to ground their Schemes of *Religion* upon pretended Revelations, as the only Way to give *them* a proper Sanction, and the *People* an Aſſurance, that their religious Performances would be accepted.

The

The Points of Knowledge mentioned under this firſt Head, are evidently ſuch as the Philoſophers were wholly ignorant of, as not falling within the Compaſs of human Reaſon in its corrupt State; and the Importance of them to the Comfort and Happineſs of Mankind, ſhows the vaſt Advantage we receive from Revelation, 'in removing many Doubts and Difficulties which would otherwiſe ariſe concerning the Nature and Attributes of God, 'in ſhowing us the true State of our own Original and Condition, and 'in acquainting us in the cleareſt Manner, upon what Terms, and by what Services, we may be ſure of his Favour and Acceptance. To all which we may add, as another Point above the Reach of human Reaſon, The comfortable Promiſe he has made us of *ſupernatural* Aid and Aſſiſtance in our ſincere Endeavours to perform what he has reveal'd to be his Will, in order to render ourſelves acceptable to him.

2. The Knowledge which the Philoſophers had of ſeveral important Points of Religion, was *dark*, *imperfect* and *uncertain*. Many of them, and thoſe, of the greateſt Note, laid it down for a general Maxim, 'That all Things were uncertain, 'That Truth lay buried in a deep Abyſs, and, 'That the furtheſt that human Wit and Underſtanding could go in Search of it, was no more than Probability and Conjecture; and accordingly we find the wiſeſt among them plainly intimating the Need there was of a Divine Revelation, to give Mankind a full and certain Knowledge of their Duty. But ſuppoſing them to have been able to lay out all the Duties and Offices of Life in the cleareſt Manner; that which diſabled them from

Cic. Nat. Deor. l. 1. Acad. qu. l. 1. Vid. Minuc. Fel. p. 112. Lact. l. 3 c. 20. See under the 3d general Head.

from *reforming* the World and obliging Men to *attend* to their Duty, was the *Uncertainty* they were under about the great and only effectual *Motives* to it, the Immortality of the Soul, and a future Account.

Cicero enumerating the Opinions of Philosophers upon this Head, not only asserts what every one knows to be true, that the whole Sect of *Epicureans* disbelievd the Soul's Immortality, but adds, That many of the most learned Philosophers were of the same Opinion; and he particularly mentions two of great Note among them; one, who in his Writings had avowedly argued against it, and another who had professedly written three Books to confute it. He tells us further, that though the *Stoicks* believed that the Soul remain'd after Death *for some Time*, yet they did not believe it was immortal. And even *Socrates* and *Cicero*, who were peculiarly favourable to the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, do yet discover some *Doubt* and *Uncertainty* about it. Cic. Tusc. q. l. 1.

Socrates, a little before his Death, tells his Friends, 'He had good Hope of some Sort of Being, when this Life was at an End'; but after that, he speaks doubtfully, and says, 'Tho' he should be mistaken, he did at least gain thus much, That the Expectation of it made him less uneasy while he liv'd, and his Error would die with him;' and he concludes, 'I am going out of the World, and you are to continue in it; which of us has the better Part, is a *Secret* to every one but God. Plato in Phæd. In Apol. Socratis.

And *Cicero*, speaking of the several Opinions concerning the Nature and Duration of the Soul, says, 'Which of these is true, God a-'lone knows; and which is most probable, a Cic. Tusc. q. l. 1.

'very great Queſtion.' And he introduces one, complaining, 'That while he was reading the 'Arguments for the Immortality of the Soul, he 'thought himſelf convinced; but as ſoon as 'he laid aſide the Book, and began to reaſon 'with himſelf, his Conviction was gone.' All which gave *Seneca* juſt Occaſion to ſay, 'That Immortality, however deſireable, was rather *promis'd* than *prov'd*, by thoſe great Men. And if the Philoſophers doubted even of the *Exiſtence* of the Soul after Death, much leſs could they pretend to know any thing of the Reſurrection of the Body, and a ſolemn Day of Judgment, and the Sentence that will be finally pronounc'd upon Good and Bad Men at that Day. So far from this, that the great Argument by which they prove that Death cannot properly ſpeaking be call'd an Evil, is, 'That it either wholly extinguiſhes our Being, or at leaſt leaves us ſuch a Being as is not ſubject to Puniſhment or Miſery in another State. And they eas'd the People of thoſe Fears, by exploding the Notion of *Infernal Torments* prepar'd for the Wicked, as mere Dreams, and Fictions of the Poets.

Sen. Ep. 102.

Plut. de Aud. Poet. Cic. Tuſc. c. l. 1. Sen. ad. Marc. c. 19.

This Uncertainty about thoſe great and fundamental Truths, was attended with fatal Effects both in *Principle* and *Practice*: In Principle, it naturally led Mankind to call in queſtion the Providence, Juſtice, and Goodneſs of God, when they obſerv'd the Proſperity of the wicked, and the Calamities of the Righteous, without being ſure that either of them ſhould ſuffer or be rewarded in another State; or elſe to doubt, whether there really was any eſſential Difference between Virtue and Vice, and whether it did not depend wholly upon the In-

Inſtitution of Men. In *Practice* ; Hope and Fear are the two Things which chiefly govern Mankind and Influence them in their Actions ; and they muſt of courſe govern and influence more or leſs, in Proportion to the *Certainty* there is, that the Things fear'd and hop'd for are real, and the Rewards and Puniſhments aſſuredly to be expected. And as the corrupt Inclinations of human Nature will eaſily overcome any Fear, the Foundation of which is but doubtful ; ſo thoſe being let looſe and freed from the Apprehenſion of a future Account, will of courſe carry Men into all Manner of Wickedneſs. Nor is it ſufficient to ſay, that they are under the Reſtraint of *human* Laws ; ſince it is certain, that very great Degrees of Wickedneſs may both be harbour'd in the Heart and carried into Execution, notwithſtanding the utmoſt that human Authority can do to prevent it.

From hence it appears, how great a Bleſſing and Benefit it is to Mankind, that the Goſpel-Revelation has given us a full Aſſurance of the Immortality of the Soul, and of Rewards and Puniſhments in another Life, according to our Behaviour in this ; and not only ſo, but has very particularly acquainted us, ' Who ſhall be our Judge. ' What the Manner and Solemnity of the Judgment, ' What is to be the Rule of Judging, ' What the Sentence that will be paſs'd both upon Good and Bad Men, and ' What will be the State of each in Conſequence thereof. The certain Expectation of theſe things, enforc'd by the Aſſurance God has given us that he takes Notice of all our Thoughts, Words and Actions in this Life, in order to that future Account, conduces greatly, or rather is of

abſolute Neceſſity, to ſecure the general Peace and Order of the World, as well as to preſerve the Virtue and Innocence of particular Perſons.

3. The Differences among the Philoſophers in Points of the greateſt Weight and Moment, were endleſs, and irreconcileable. This is a Truth ſo well known, and ſo univerſally acknowledged, that thoſe among us who have the greateſt Zeal for natural Reaſon as a ſufficient Guide in Religion, will not deny the Fact. A lively Deſcription of which, we find in an ancient Writer of the Church, 'Every Sect of 'them overthrows all others, in order to eſta-'bliſh itſelf, and can allow none to be wiſe, be-'cauſe by that it would acknowledge itſelf to 'be fooliſh; and as *it* overthrows the Reſt, ſo 'is itſelf overthrown *by* the Reſt.' And elſewhere, 'To what End ſhould we fight againſt 'thoſe, who are *deſtroying* one another?' Nor can it be ſaid, that theſe Differences were only about Matters of leſs Conſequence; ſince it is notorious, that the moſt *important* Points in Religion were Subjects of the greateſt Diſputes. While ſome aſſerted the Being of a God, others openly deny'd it; and others again ran into the Notion of a *Multiplicity* of Gods, Celeſtial, Aerial, Terreſtial, Infernal; * and as every Country had its peculiar Gods, ſo the Philoſophers made it a general Rule, that every one ſhould Worſhip the Gods of his own Country. While ſome (as I have ſhown) were willing to believe that the Soul was immortal, and that they ſhould live in a future State, others affirm'd it to be mortal, and to die with the Body: While ſome affirm'd that Virtue and Vice, as founded in the Nature of Things, were eternal and unchangeable; it

Lact. l. 3. c. 4.

— c. 28.

Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 1.

* Plato, de Leg. l. 4.

Epict. Ench. c. 38.

Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 3.

— de Leg. l. 2.

Diog. Laert. l. 2. p. 89. 134, 138. l. 9. p. 581. l. 10. p. 671

was

Max. Tyr. Diſſ. 1. Sen. Ep. l. 10. p. 97, 302.

was the Doctrine of others, that nothing was Good or Evil, Juſt or Unjuſt, Right or Wrong, otherwiſe than as the Laws and Cuſtoms of particular Countries determin'd: While one Sect affirm'd that Virtue was the ſole Good, and its own Reward; another Sect rejecting that Notion in the Caſe of Virtue in *Diſtreſs*, made the good Things of this Life a *neceſſary* Ingredient of Happineſs; and a third ſet up *Pleaſures*, or at leaſt Indolence and a Freedom from Pain, as the final Good that Men ought to propoſe to themſelves; (upon which *Differences Tully* very juſtly obſerves, "That they who "do not agree in ſtating what is the *chief End* "or *Good*, muſt of courſe differ in the *whole* "*Syſtem* of Precepts for the Conduct of Life.") Again, While many of them thought it reaſonable to believe, that the general Order and Government of the World could not be maintain'd without the Superintendence of ſome ſuperior Power; one whole Sect abſolutely deny'd a Providence; others acknowledged no more than a † general Providence which did not reſpect particular Beings; others, who own'd a particular Providence, extended it only to * greater Matters, while the leſs, in their Opinion, were neglected; others again deny'd the † Omniſcience of God, which was little leſs than the denial of a Providence as to the Effects it ought to have upon the Behaviour of Mankind. And while ſome talked of their Gods taking *Vengeance* upon the Bad and rewarding the Good, in order to deter Men from Wickedneſs and excite them to Goodneſs; others exploded the Notion of the Gods being **pleas'd* or *diſpleas'd* on any Account, and by that, entirely remov'd out of the Minds of Men the *Deſire* of pleaſing and the *Fear* of diſ-

Stoicks.

Ariſtotelians.

Epicureans.

Cic. Acad. qu. l. 1. — de Fin. l. 5.

Epicureans.

Ariſtotelians.

— † Plut. de Pl. Phil. l. 2. c. 3. Diog. Laert. l. 5. — Arian. Epict. l. 1. c. 12. * Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 2. &. 3. † Cic. Nat. Deor. l. 1. De Div. l. 2. De Fato. Min. Fel. p. 10. Var. * Lact. de

diſpleaſing them, and all Thoughts of praying to them or thanking them, for the Benefits they either wanted, or enjoy'd. Upon which, it is juſtly obſerv'd by an ancient Chriſtian Writer, That if this Principle of God's being neither pleas'd nor diſpleas'd, were true, there muſt be an End of all Religion; ſince it leaves no Foundation either for *honouring* or *fearing* the Deity. And yet it is ſaid to have been the univerſal Opinion of Philoſophers (not only of thoſe who thought that God did not concern himſelf with human Affairs, but of thoſe who believ'd he did) that he was neither *angry* with Men, nor would *puniſh* them.

Lact. de Irâ. c. 6.

Cic. Offic. l. 3.

Theſe and the other Differences among them which would fill Volumes, are not mention'd as any Reproach to the Philoſophers in Point of Ability and Underſtanding; ſince it happen'd no otherwiſe to them, than it always will do to any Number of Men, who in this corrupt State of Things will depend upon themſelves alone, in Matters of Religion. But I mention them, to ſhow the Weakneſs and Folly of thoſe, who, becauſe the Philoſophers now and then indulg'd themſelves in Speculations of a Divine Nature, would ſend us to them for a *complete* and *uniform* Scheme of Religion; who, from their having laid down many uſeful Rules, grounded upon the natural Connexion of Things as they appear in daily Experience and Obſervation, in order to the wiſe Conduct of human Affairs and our Peace and Happineſs in this Life, would infer, that they are therefore proper and ſufficient Guides to our Happineſs in the next; and who, in reality, under this pretext, are doing all they can to gratify and encourage the voluptuous

Part

Part of Mankind, by discharging them from all Regard to the Laws of Christ (which have the Sanction of Divine Authority, and against which there can be no Objection, but that they are too pure for Appetites so much vitiated and deprav'd,) and leaving them to form a Religion for themselves out of this or that Philosopher, whose Maxims and Doctrins they can best Relish; the Wisest of which, (how *sublime* soever some of the Thoughts may seem) were no more than the Imaginations and Conjectures of fallible Men.

But be their Schemes of Religion what they would, these two Things are certain; 'That no one Philosopher had more Right than another, to impose his Scheme upon Mankind; and, 'That setting aside Revelation, no one Person at this Day has any Authority to determin, amidst so many different and contradictory Opinions, which of the Philosophers was in the Right, and which in the Wrong. Upon this Foot therefore the greatest Part of Mankind are left in a State of endless Perplexity, without Ability to determin for themselves, and without any certain Guide on whose Determination they may safely rely. And this made one of the best and wisest among them say, 'That 'Error was so mix'd with Truth, and oft-times 'with such likeness to each other, that there 'was no way left to determin the Judgment;' and, 'That it would be Time enough to blame 'the *Sceptick* Philosophy which *doubted* of 'every thing, when either the Rest of the 'Philosophers were agreed, or some one should 'be found who could ascertain the Truth.' Which shows the great Advantage of a *divine Revelation*, as well to ascertain our Duty,

Cic. de. Nat. Deor. l. 1.

Ibid. Academicks.

as

as to engage our Attention and Regard to it; to give all Men, great and ſmall, learned and unlearned, a ſure Rule, and a clear View of all they are to do, and effectually to engage them in a ſteady and uniform Purſuit of the great End that ſuch a Revelation propoſes.

By attending to the Matters wherein the Philoſophers differ'd, we ſee clearly that they were Points which concern'd the very *Being* of Religion and Virtue; and that thoſe Differences render'd the Motives and Obligations to both, precarious and uncertain. And this ſhows how unjuſt the Objection is, which Infidels raiſe upon this Head, from the different Opinions among Chriſtians, and the ſeveral Sects and Denominations form'd upon thoſe Differences. As long as Men are Men, and have different Degrees of Underſtanding, and every one a Partiality to his own Conceptions; it is not to be expected, that they ſhould agree in any one entire Scheme and every Part of it, in the Circumſtances as well as the Subſtance, in the Manner of Things as well as in the Things themſelves. The Queſtion therefore is not in general about a Difference in Opinion, which in our preſent State is unavoidable, but about the Weight and Importance of the Things wherein Chriſtians differ and the Things wherein they agree. And it will appear, that the ſeveral Denominations of Chriſtians agree both in the Subſtance of Religion, and in the neceſſary Enforcements of the Practice of it: That the World and all Things in it were created by God, and are under the Direction and Government of his all-powerful Hand and all-ſeeing Eye: That there is an eſſential Difference between Good and Evil, Virtue and

and Vice; 'That there will be a State of future Rewards and Punishments according to our Behaviour in this Life; 'That Christ was a Teacher sent from God, and that his Apostles were divinely inspir'd; 'That all Christians are bound to *declare* and *profess* themselves to be his Disciples; 'That not only the Exercise of the several Virtues, but also a Belief in Christ, is necessary in order to their obtaining the Pardon of Sin, the Favour of God, and Eternal Life; 'That the Worship of God is to be perform'd chiefly by the Heart, in Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings; and as to all other Points, 'That they are bound to live by the Rules which Christ and his Apostles have left them in the Holy Scriptures. Here then is a fixt, certain, and uniform Rule of Faith and Practice, containing all the most necessary Points of Religion, established by a divine Sanction, embrac'd as such by all Denominations of Christians, and in itself abundantly sufficient to preserve the Knowledge and Practice of Religion in the World. As to Points of greater Intricacy, and which require uncommon Degrees of Penetration and Knowledge; such indeed have been Subjects of Dispute among Persons of *Study* and *Learning* in the several Ages of the Christian Church; but the *People* are not obliged to enter into them, so long as they do not touch the *Foundations* of Christianity, nor have an Influence upon *Practice*. In other Points, it is sufficient that they believe the Doctrins, so far as they find, upon due Enquiry and Examination according to their several Abilities and Opportunities, that God has reveal'd them. Now this is a State of Things very different from that of the Heathen

World; in which their Teachers differ'd about the moſt important Points in Religion: and while no one could claim an Authority from God, nor any Right to require an Aſſent to his Doctrins: the Generality of People had no certain Teſt to try them by, nor by Conſequence any Means to deliver themſelves out of a Maze of endleſs Doubt and Uncertainty. Which is well expreſs'd by an ancient Writer, in Anſwer to the Queſtion, Did the Philoſophers then teach nothing that was right? Yes, ſays he, 'many Things; but their Precepts have no '*Weight*, becauſe they are human, and want 'a divine Sanction.' They are not believ'd, becauſe 'he who hears, thinks himſelf a Man, 'as well as he who teaches.

Lact. l. 3. c. 27.

4. The Philoſophers taught Doctrins, which directly tend to encourage Vice and Wickedneſs in the World. Of this ſort, were the Notions already mentioned, concerning Providence, and the Omniſcience and Omnipreſence of God, and their denying that he was either pleas'd or displeas'd with Mankind, and their reſolving the Diſtinctions between Good and Evil into human Authority and Appointment. Such alſo was the Doctrin of *Fate*, or Men's doing every thing thro' *Neceſſity*, and not by *Choice*; which takes away all Virtue and Vice, and leaves no Place for Rewards or Puniſhments either here or hereafter; and yet this was the avow'd Doctrin of one famous Sect among them. And the Prevalency of this Doctrin of Fate in the Heathen World, together with the pernicious Influence it naturally has upon Virtue and Religion, was the Reaſon why the ancient Fathers of the Chriſtian Church took ſo much Pains

Stoicks.

Pains in their ſeveral Writings to confute and expoſe it.

Nor did they only hold *Principles* deſtructive of Virtue, but alſo maintain'd *Practices* of a very vile and corrupt Nature. *Plato* taught the Expedience and Lawfulneſs of * *Expoſing Children* in particular Caſes, and *Ariſtotle* alſo of *Abortion*; At † *Athens*, the great Seat and Nurſery of Philoſophers, it was laid down for a Rule, ‘* That Infants which appear'd to be maim'd, ſhould either be kill'd or expos'd; and, ‘ † That the *Athenians* might lawfully invade and enſlave any People, who in their Opinion were *fit* to be made Slaves. * Many of the Philoſophers maintain'd the Lawfulneſs of Self-Murder. † Not only the Epicureans and others, but even *Plato* himſelf allow'd Fornication, and, which is more ſhocking, a Community of Wives; and the moſt famous among them were known not only to approve but practiſe * unnatural Luſt. To which we may add the *Cynicks*, who laying aſide the natural Reſtraints of Shame and Modeſty, committed the Acts of Luſt like brute Beaſts, *openly*, and *in the Sight of the Sun*; and the *Stoicks*, who held that no † Words or Speech of any kind ought to be avoided or cenſur'd, as *filthy* and *obſcene*.

Plat. de Rep. l. 5.
* *Caſting out, to periſh.*
† Ariſt. Po. l. 7. c. 16.
ibid. l. 7. c. 17.
† —ibid. l. 2. c. 14.
* Ariſt. Pol. l. 7. c. 16.
Cic. Fin. l. 1.
Sen. Ep. 12, 28, 58, 70.
† Cic. pro Cælio.
Plat. Conviv.
—de Leg. l. 8.
Athen. l. 13.
* Athen. l. 13.
Lucian. de Amore.
Plutarch. de L'b. Educ.
Cic. Tuſc. q. l. 4.
† Cic. Ep. l. 9.

Theſe are Principles and Doctrins, by which many of the Philoſopers, and thoſe of greateſt Note, let Men looſe from the Obligations of Duty, and gave them full Liberty to indulge their brutal Appetites and degrade human Nature into that of Beaſts, while they were filling their Heads with fine Notions and exalted Speculations. And as theſe Indulgences ſo agreeable to the Corruptions of Nature, plainly account for that Zeal which is ſhown

for Reaſon and Philoſophy as our beſt Guides in Religion; ſo the great Objection againſt the Goſpel Revelation is, that it expreſly forbids Uncleanneſs of all kinds, whether in Thought or Deed, as that which above all other things poiſons and corrupts the Soul, and makes it utterly unfit for the ſpiritual Joys and Delights of the next World; for which the pure Precepts of the Goſpel, and the daily Practice of them, are deſigned to prepare us.

5. In Fact, the Influence which the Ancient Philoſophers had in reforming Mankind, was inconſiderable. *Idolatry* was univerſally practiſed throughout the Heathen World, and the Worſhip of their Gods conſiſted of the moſt filthy, abſurd, and abominable Rites: Strumpets running up and down the Streets naked, with obſcene Speeches and wanton Geſtures: Men inflaming themſelves with Wine, and after that in the Dark ſatisfying their Luſt promiſcuouſly among a Number of Women: Temples erected to a Goddeſs as the Patroneſs of Luſt, and ſhe miniſtered unto by lewd Women, who proſtituted themſelves before her, and dedicated their Gain to her; with other Inſtances of Obſcenity, too groſs to be mention'd, and yet avowedly made a Part of their Religious Rites. And it is not to be wonder'd, that *Uncleanneſs* of almoſt every kind was freely and openly practis'd among them, when their Worſhip conſiſted of it, and their Philoſophers taught it both by their Doctrin and their Practice. The Oblation of *Human Sacrifices* to their Gods was frequently practis'd; nor was their own *Offſpring* ſpared upon ſome Occaſions. Nothing could be more cruel and barbarous, than to take Pleaſure in ſeeing Men murder and deſtroy

Floralia.

Bacchanalia.

Venus.

See before, p. 27.

one

one another, which yet was avowedly practis'd in their publick Shews, and Persons were *train'd up* to that inhuman Exercise, and permitted to hire themselves out to the Work; and it is affirm'd by one who wrote an entire Discourse upon the Subject, that even War itself did not occasion so great a Destruction of Mens Lives, as those Shews which they instituted for publick Diversion. Nor, in private Life, can we reasonably hope or expect to find among them the great Virtues of Love, Meekness and Forgiveness, when we find *Socrates* declaring it neither unjust nor revengeful, to rejoice in the Calamities of our Enemies; and *Cicero* expressly approving and professing *Revenge*; and *Aristotle* speaking of Meekness, not only as a Defect of the Mind, and as carrying in it too great a Disposition to forgive, but calling the patient enduring of Reproach, the Spirit of a *Slave*.

Lipsii Saturn. l. 1. c. 12.

Plato, Phileb.

Cic. de Offic. l. 3. Tusc. q l. 3. Ep. ad Attic. l. 9.

Arist. Eth. l. 4. c. 11.

When our Saviour came into the World, and for some time before, human Knowledge of all kinds, and particularly the Study of Philosophy, was cultivated and improv'd in the *Roman* Empire, with the greatest Application, and by the ablest Hands. But how little Effect either theirs or the Writings of the *Greek* Philosophers had upon the Generality of Mankind, may be learnt from St. *Paul*'s Account of the State of the Heathen World, and the Cautions he gives the Christian Converts against their wicked and abominable Practices. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye* henceforth *walk not as* other Gentiles *walk, in the Vanities of their Mind; Having the Understanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God, thro' the Ignorance that*

Ephes. 4. 17, 18, 19.

is

is in them, becauſe of the Blindneſs of their Hearts; Who being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over unto Laſciviouſneſs, to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs. And again,

Epheſ. 5. 11, 12. *Have no Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of* Darkneſs, *but rather reprove them; For it is a Shame even to* ſpeak *of thoſe Things which are* done *of them in ſecret*, i. e. in the Celebration

See p. 28. of ſeveral of their Rites and Myſteries, which was accompanied with all manner of Lewdneſs.

Col 3. 5, 6, 7. And in his Epiſtle to the *Coloſſians*, *Mortify therefore your Members which are upon Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence, and Covetouſneſs which is Idolatry; for which things ſake the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Diſobedience; in the which* ye alſo walked *ſome time, when*

1 John, 1. 5. *ye* liv'd *in them.* Agreeably to this, St. *John* tells us, that except the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity, *the whole World lay in Wickedneſs*; and

Rom. 1. 26, 27, 29, 30, 31. St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of the Gentile World in general as living under the Law of Nature, and having mention'd *unnatural Luſt* as common among them, goes on and tells us, That *they were fill'd with Unrighteouſneſs, Fornication, Wickedneſs, Covetouſneſs, Maliciouſneſs; full of Envy, Murder, Debate, Deceit, Malignity, Whiſperers, Backbiters, Haters of God, Deſpiteful, Proud, Boaſters, Inventers of evil Things, diſobedient to Parents, without Underſtanding, Covenant-breakers, without natural Affection,*

1 Pet. 4. 3 *implacable, unmerciful.* St *Peter* alſo exhorting the Gentiles who had been converted to Chriſtianity, to live as became their new Profeſſion, tells them, that *the Time paſt of their Life may ſuffice them to have wrought the Will of the* Gentiles, *in which they walked in Laſciviouſneſs, Luſts,*

Exceſs

Exceſs of Wine, Revellings, Banquettings, and abominable Idolatries.

And, in Truth, between the Corruptions of human Nature, and the Inability of the Philoſophers to reform them, we are not to wonder that the Heathen World had grown by degrees to ſuch a Pitch of Wickedneſs. 'The Philoſophers in the ſeveral Ages were but *few*; 'The Numbers who repair'd to them for Inſtruction, were ſmall in Compariſon, and their Inſtructions confin'd to their own Scholars, who were uſually Perſons only of Fortune and Diſtinction; 'The generality of the People had no Opportunity to be inſtructed by them, nor if they had, were they able to underſtand and enter into the many dark and abſtruſe Notions of their Inſtructors; 'The Publick Rites of Worſhip, which the People did attend, conſiſted wholly of the Ceremonies perform'd by their Prieſts, without any moral Inſtructions or Leſſons of Duty; 'Tho' the Philoſophers had been more clear, few of them had *Schemes* of Religion and Duty, or any more than ſcatter'd Notions of Morality, added to ſome private and ſingular Tenets to diſtinguiſh them from other Sects: 'Tho' they had given Schemes entire and uniform, they had not ſufficient Authority either to command Attention, or require Obedience; 'Or whatever Authority any one had, it was greatly diminiſh'd by the endleſs Diſputes among the Philoſophers themſelves; 'And tho' they had been qualified to Teach in all other Reſpects, little Fruit was to be expected from *Teaching*, where it was not accompanied with good *Living*. Which laſt Defect is noted by *Tully*, in this remarkable Paſ-

Cic. Tusc. qu. l. 2. Passage; 'Scarce any of the Philosophers, says 'he, are form'd in Mind and Manners, accord-'ing to the Dictates of Reason: Scarce any, 'who do not make their Institutions rather an 'Ostentation of Knowledge, than a Rule of 'Life; Scarce any, who obey themselves, and 'are govern'd by their own Precepts.' And so, Arist. Eth. l. 2. c. 3. *Aristotle*, long before, represented the Scholars of the Philosophers, 'as learning to *wrangle*, 'rather than to *live*, and being no more bet-'ter'd by the moral Lessons of their Masters, 'than Sick-Men would be by the Discourses 'of their Physician without taking his Pre-'scriptions.' To the same purpose, Quintil. Inst. l. 1. Præf. *Quintilian* speaks of the Philosophers of his own Time, 'That the most notorious Vices were 'skreen'd under that Name; and that they 'did not labour to maintain the Character of 'Philosophers by Virtue and Study, but con-'ceal'd very vicious Lives under an austere 'Look and a different Habit from the Rest of 'the World.'

But there is yet another Way of judging what the State of Religion in any Country is like to be, where natural Reason is their only Guide; and that is, from the Notions and Practices that have been found among People who were unknown to the Antients, by the later Discoverers of Countries, and by others who have travell'd into those Countries. A Miller, Propagation of Christianity, c. 7. Collection of that sort has been lately made out of Books of Travels and other authentick Accounts, by a faithful and judicious Hand; and to let you see more clearly and at one View how absurd and abominable they were, I have here reduc'd them to their several Heads, of *Worship*, *Doctrin*, and *Practice*.

As

As to their WORSHIP; it may be truly ſaid in general, that *Idolatry* has been found in almoſt every Country that has been diſcover'd, and, in many of them Rites of Worſhip very wicked and abominable. In [1] ſome, they were performed by *Women*, who in performing them laid aſide all natural Shame and Modeſty; and in [2] others, Women proſtituted themſelves for the Maintenance of their Idol, and in Honour of it. In [3] ſome Places, the People cut off Pieces of their own Fleſh and threw them to their Idol, and in [4] many others they were found to offer *human* Sacrifices, and vaſt Numbers of them at a Time. The Objects of their Worſhip were the [5] Sun, Moon and Stars, [6] the four Elements, the [7] ſeveral Quarters of the Earth, [8] Apes, [9] Elephants, [10] Serpents, Vipers, Dragons, Tygers, Herbs, Trees, [11] Birds, Fiſhes, Mountains; and in many Places [12] Evil Spirits. And, together with their Idolatrous Worſhip, [13] Sorcery, Divination, and Magick, were found to be common among them.

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1. Formoſa, and the Philippine Iſlands. 2. Biſnagar and Naſinga in the Eaſt-Indies. — Camdu, in Tartary. 3. Biſnagar, and Naſinga. 4. Ceylon, Mexico, Peru, Terrafirma, Virginia. 5. Tartary, Philippine Iſlands, Guinea: Auſico and Jagos and Monomotapa, (all in Africa,) Zocotara, an Iſland near Africa, Chili, Peru, Terrafirma, Canada, Florida, Hiſpaniola, Virginia. 6 Ceylon. 7. Tonquin, in the Eaſt-Indies. 8. Goa. 9. Ceylon. 10. Congo and Angola, in Africa. 11. Guinea. 12. Ceylon, Java, Philippine Iſlands, Æthiopia, Virginia. 13. Tartary, China, Terrafirma, Braſil, Canada, Granada, Hiſpaniola, Florida, Virginia, New-England.

Among their DOCTRINS, and Heads of Belief, were found theſe that follow. [1]. Two Gods, one of Heaven, the other of Earth; [2]. Two Sorts of Gods, Dæmons to be fear'd, and Conquerors and Benefactors to be honour'd; [3]. Several Gods preſiding over ſeveral Quarters of the Earth; [4]. One God above the Reſt, becoming ſo, by firſt paſſing thro' a Multitude of Bodies; [5]. Gods ſubject to various Changes, and limited to certain Times of Government; [6]. Providence concerning itſelf only about the great Affairs of the World; [7]. The Tranſmigration of human Souls into the Bodies of Beaſts; [8]. Pagods eating and drinking like Men; [9]. The Souls of Men, after Death, needing Meat and Drink, and other Accommodations of this Life.

Many PRACTICES have been found among them, that are abominable; [1]. Women burning themſelves with their Husbands, when dead; [2]. The chief Servants of a Prince kill'd at his Death, to attend him in another World; [3]. Eating Men's Fleſh, and Shambles for ſelling it; [4]. Sucking up the Blood of wounded

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1. Tartary. 2. Japan. 3. Formoſa. 4. Siam. 5. Malabar. 6. Malabar, Ceylon, Japan, Florida. 7. Indians, Tartars, Florida. 8. The Bramins. 9. Tartary, Guinea, Terrafirma, Canada.

1. Eaſt-Indies, Guinea. 2. Guinea, Terrafirma. 3. Jagos (in Africa) Brazil, Hiſpaniola. 4. Tartary.

and

and dying Perſons ; [5]. Feaſting upon the Bodies of their Captives ; [6]. Having a Number of Wives and Concubines, and putting away Wives at Pleaſure ; [7]. Expoſing and Killing their Children, if born under an unhappy Planet, or [8]. born before the Mother was of ſuch an Age, or [9]. if the Parents found themſelves over-charged. †

† More Inſtances of the like Kind may be ſeen in Mr. *Lock*'s Eſſay, l. 1. c. 3. S. 9.

Theſe and the like Inſtances of Corruption in Worſhip, Doctrin, and Practice, which have prevail'd, and do ſtill prevail, in ſeveral Parts of the Heathen World, may further ſhow the Inſufficiency of *natural Reaſon* to be a Guide in Religion, and into what monſtrous Opinions and Practices whole Nations may be led, where that is their Guide, without any Help from Revelation. Nor will it take off the Force of this Argument, to ſay, that theſe were owing to an *undue Uſe* of their Reaſon, which is in Effect to beg the Queſtion ; or that the Meaſure of Reaſon they had was low and imperfect, ſince they appear'd to be skilful and dextrous enough in wordly Matters, in the Arts of annoying their Neighbours and defending themſelves againſt Incurſions, in entring into Leagues for their mutual Defence, and conducting the ordinary Affairs of Life according to the Manners and Cuſtoms of their ſeveral Countries. Nor are the Abſurdities in Religion that have been found among *them*, greater than

See before, Pag. 28.

5. Canada. 6. Almoſt every where in Pagan Countries. 7. Ceylon. 8. Formoſa. 9. China.

thoſe that have been found among the moſt polite Nations before the Publication of the Goſpel; which are a joint Proof, that no Age or Country, be it rude or civiliz'd, inſtructed or uninſtructed in Arts and Sciences, infected or uninfected with Plenty and Luxury, is ſecur'd by mere natural Reaſon againſt falling into the groſſeſt Errors and Corruptions in Religion.

Hitherto, you have ſeen the pernicious Errors and wicked Practices into which the World has fal'n both in ancient and later Days, notwithſtanding the Light of Natural Reaſon, and the Leſſons of Philoſophers. But as the Chriſtian Inſtitution in its *Nature* and *Tendency* is far better calculated for the Reformation of Mankind, than any Teaching or Diſciplin the World had in the Days of Heatheniſm; ſo in Fact it has had a far greater Effect in the Advancement of true Religion, and the Reformation of the Lives and Manners of Men. Not to inſiſt upon the exalted Degrees of Purity and Perfection to which Chriſtianity rais'd ſo many of its firſt Profeſſors, 'their Contempt of the World, 'their wonderful Courage and Patience under Perſecution, 'their Mortifications and Self Denials, 'their fervent Love and Charity and Devotion', not, I ſay, to inſiſt upon theſe, tho' the true and genuin Effects of Chriſtianity, becauſe it may be ſaid, they were Effects of an *extraordinary* kind, and wrought only upon *particular* Perſons; let us take a View of it, not as it was embrac'd by ſingle Perſons or Families, but as it became the receiv'd Religion of whole Countries, and ſee what Effects it had among them. And it is univerſally true,

true, that wherever Chriſtianity prevail'd, Oracles ceas'd, Idols were deſtroy'd, and the Worſhip of the true God eſtabliſhed. And whereas the Heathen Worſhip, as we have ſeen, conſiſted of the Sacrifices of Beaſts and Men, and was accompanied with many fooliſh, cruel and impure Rites, Chriſtianity baniſh'd all theſe, and, wherever it was receiv'd, did eſtabliſh a Worſhip ſuitable to the pure and ſpiritual Nature of God, a Worſhip of the Heart, conſiſting of Prayers, and Praiſes and Thankſgivings, to him who is the Author of our Being, and under whoſe daily Protection we live, and who beſtows upon us all the good Things we enjoy. And there is no Chriſtian Country, wherein this reaſonable Service is not ſolemnly performed by Miniſters, and attended by the People; to which, and to the Inſtructions and Exhortations of Chriſtian Preachers, it is to be aſcrib'd, that the Knowledge of the true God, and the Duty we owe him, is preſerv'd to ſuch a Degree upon the Minds of the Generality of the People, and that ſeveral Vices which were not only practis'd but publickly allow'd in the Times of Heatheniſm, are ſcarce known, and never nam'd without Abhorrence, in Chriſtian Countries. Nor can it be ſaid, with any Colour of Reaſon or Truth, that the general Order, Regularity, and Senſe of Duty, which is found in Chriſtian Countries at this Day, compar'd with the Cruelties, Diſorders, and Exceſſes of all kinds, that are generally practis'd in Heathen Nations, is not owing to the Chriſtian Inſtitution and Worſhip, and to the Certainty of future

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Rewards and Puniſhments that Chriſt brought to Light; the Senſe of which is preſerv'd upon the Minds of the People by ſuch publick Teaching. And tho' ſo great is the Corruption of human Nature, that notwithſtanding thoſe Means of Inſtruction and thoſe Reſtraints from Wickedneſs, many Diſorders and Exceſſes are practis'd in Chriſtian Countries; it is ſufficient to our preſent Purpoſe, 'That if thoſe Means and Reſtraints were remov'd, the Exceſſes would evidently be far greater and more general than they are; 'That the Commiſſion of them among Chriſtians, is by far leſs frequent, and is attended with much more Caution and Shame, than among Heathens; 'That beſides thoſe *general* Influences of Chriſtianity, ſuch Exceſſes are in ſome Meaſure balanced by the extraordinary Degrees of Piety, Purity, and Exactneſs of Life and Manners, which are obſerv'd by Multitudes of People in every Chriſtian Country; 'That the Deſign of the Chriſtian Inſtitution was not to *force* Men to be good, but only to propoſe fit Motives and proper Encouragements and Aſſiſtances to make them ſo; and our Saviour himſelf ſuppoſes that in his Kingdom here upon Earth there will always be Tares growing up with the Wheat (a *Mixture* of good, and bad) till he himſelf ſhall make the *final* Separation. Tho' his Kingdom is not *of* this World, it is *in* it; and it is a very unfair Inference, that becauſe Wickedneſs is found in Chriſtian Countries, therefore Chriſtianity has fail'd of it's End.

Mat. 13. 24.

III. *A Divine Revelation was not only Expedient, but highly Needful, to be a ſure Guide*

in Matters of Religion. This follows from the particulars which have been treated of under the laſt Head, in Relation to the ancient Philoſophers. For it is agreed on all Hands, that the moſt ſucceſsful Efforts of meer *Natural Reaſon*, towards the Diſcovery of divine Truths and the Duties to be perform'd by us, with our Obligations to perform them, were made by the Philoſophers. And, 'If they, after all their Searches, could never tell in what manner God was to be worſhip'd, nor by what Means Sinners might be reconcil'd to him, and recover his favour; 'If they could never come to a *certain* Knowledge concerning the Immortality of the Soul and future Rewards and Puniſhments, which are the principal Motives to the Performance of our Duty, and the only Motives that can make it regarded by the Generality of Mankind; 'If the Differences among the Philoſophers concerning Points of the greateſt Importance in Religion, were ſo many, and ſo eargerly purſu'd by the ſeveral Sects, that inſtead of informing Mankind in their Duty, they perplex'd and diſtracted them, and at laſt left them under greater Uncertainties than they were before, while no one had more Authority than another to preſcribe a fix'd Scheme of Duty; 'If many of the Philoſophers mix'd Precepts of Vice with their Precepts of Virtue; and, 'If in Fact, under their Direction and Diſciplin, the Heathen World and the Generality of Mankind in their ſeveral Ages, remain'd in a State of groſs Idolatry, Uncleanneſs,

cleanneſs, Impiety, and Immorality of all Kinds; It follows, that either Mankind muſt remain irrecoverably in a State of Ignorance and Corruption, or that there muſt be ſome divine Revelation to help them out of it.

And, in Truth, it is very abſurd to ſuppoſe, That either Philoſophy, or any Thing but a divine Revelation could do it. The Philoſophers plainly ſaw a great Degree of Darkneſs and Degeneracy in the Mind of Man; their Senſe of which is well expreſs'd by *Tully*, 'If, ſays he, Nature had ſo fram'd 'us, as to give us a full and perfect View 'of her, and an Ability to follow her as 'our Guide, then Mankind would have 'needed no other Teacher: But now, the 'Light ſhe has given us is no more than 'little Sparks, which we quickly extinguiſh 'by corrupt Lives and perverſe Opinions; 'ſo that the true Light of Nature is no 'where to be found'. And then he goes on, and ſays, 'There are in our Minds the '*Seeds* of Virtue, by which Nature would 'conduct us to Happineſs, if they were 'allow'd to grow up. But now, no ſooner 'are we born, but we fall into a wretched 'Depravity and Corruption of Manners and 'Opinions". But though the Philoſophers clearly ſaw this Corruption and Depravity, how could they find a Cure for it, when they knew not the Cauſe of it? The Recovery of Mankind depended wholly upon the Will and Pleaſure of God, and the Method of it was not to be known but by Revelation from him. The Means whereby it was

Cic. Tuſc. qu. l. 3. Præf.

to

be wrought, was a Supernatural Aſſiſtance; which being his own free Gift, could not be made known and enſur'd by any other Hand. And therefore we find two of the greateſt Philoſophers, *Socrates* and *Plato*, deſpairing of the Recovery of Mankind out of a ſtate of Error and Corruption, without ſome *extraordinary* Aſſiſtance from God. *Socrates* ſpeaking to the *Athenians* of himſelf, tells them, " That when " he is gone, they will fall into an irrecove- " rable State, unleſs God ſhall take care of " them, and ſend them another Inſtructor. " Plato Apol. Socratis.

And *Plato*, ſpeaking of the wrong Methods of Education among the *Athenians*, ſays, " That " in ſuch a ſtate of things, whatever is kept " right and as it ought to be, muſt be effected " by a *divine* Interpoſition." And elſewhere, he introduces one of the Scholars of *Socrates*, complaining how difficult it is to diſcover the Truth by human Reaſon, but yet acknowledging it to be every one's Duty to employ it, and to rely upon it, " Unleſs one could find ſome " more ſure and ſafe Pilot, ſuch as a *divine* Di- " rection would be. " De Republ. l. 6. Plato in Phæd.

But we will ſuppoſe, what is far from being ſo, that one or other of the Philoſophers had in their ſeveral Writings diſcover'd the *Whole* of Religion; this would not by any means have render'd a Divine Revelation Needleſs, becauſe whatever human Reaſon pretends to diſcover, muſt be judg'd by human Reaſon whether it be true or falſe, and it was not likely the *generality* of People ſhould be able to make ſuch a judgment, ſince there was ſcarce any one Point in which the Philoſophers themſelves did not oppoſe and contradict one another, while no one pretended to have any

higher Guide than his own Reaſon, nor by conſequence any right to advance and eſtabliſh his own Notions in oppoſition to all the reſt. So that, in this caſe, it is manifeſt there would ſtill have been wanting a Superior Authority to give a Sanction to ſome one Scheme; which could only be given, either immediately by God, or by ſome Perſon who gave evident Teſtimonies of his coming from God; and none of the Philoſophers pretending to this, Mankind were left to be toſs'd about by contrary Waves, without either Pilot, or Star, or Compaſs, to bring them to their Harbour. Some of the Philoſophers had indeed an implicit Submiſſion paid to their Dictates, but that was only from their own Scholars, who thought themſelves bound to maintain the Doctrines of their Sect as ſuch, tho' without any Pretence of divine Authority in the Founder. But the caſe was otherwiſe with our Saviour: He is ſaid by the Evangeliſts to teach with *Authority*, and to teach with *Power*; and he had a Right ſo to do, becauſe he prov'd by his Miracles that he had a Commiſſion from God, and by that was fully empower'd to declare the Will of God, and to deliver to Mankind a fixt, certain, and indiſpenſable Rule of Duty.

Mat. vii. 29. Luk. iv. 32.

IV. *Mankind are oblig'd to* Enquire, *whether any Revelation has been made, and what Evidences there are of its coming from God.* If they believe they are the Creatures of God, they muſt think themſelves bound to pay Adoration to him as their Creator, and cannot but be concern'd to know in what manner he will be worſhip'd, and what is the Duty and Homage that he requires at their Hands. If they believe that they are *dependent* Creatures, and need

need the Favour and Protection of God, they cannot but desire to know in what way they may most please him, and what are the surest Means of obtaining his Favour: If they believe, that God governs the World, and that they live under his Providence, they cannot but desire the best Light that is to be had, from his own Declarations and the Examples of former Times, into the Rules of his Providence, and the ordinary Methods of his Dealings with Mankind: If they believe a State of future Rewards and Punishments, according to their Behaviour in this Life, they cannot but desire to know, with the utmost certainty and assurance, what the Behaviour is which will secure the one, and avoid the other: and of all these things there can be no knowledge or assurance, equal to that which God himself gives. So that, while Men, out of a Zeal for what they call Natural Religion, are *unconcern'd* whether God has made any Revelation of his Will or not, they violate the Laws of Nature in a double respect; First, by resisting that natural *Impression* which has always carried Men to *Enquire* after the Declarations of God's Will; and then, by an obstinate unconcernedness for their own Safety and Welfare, contrary to the great and fundamental Law of Nature, Self-Preservation.

No one who believes there is a God, and that he is a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Knowledge, can doubt whether he *can* make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, which may be fully attested to come from him, by Miracles, and Predictions of future Events, and the like undeniable Testimonies of a divine Mission. To affirm this, would not only be in

effect to deny a God, but to contradict the univerſal Belief that we find in all Ages and Nations, of divine Communications with Men; which ſhews at leaſt the general Senſe of Mankind, as to the poſſibility of the thing. And certainly, conſidering the falſe and very corrupt Notions the World was fal'n into, concerning God, and his Worſhip, and the other Duties we owe him, notwithſtanding the *Examples* of ſome good Men in the ſucceſſive Ages, who retained upon their Minds a Senſe of Religion, and their *Endeavours* to convince Mankind of the natural Connection there is between Virtue and Happineſs, Vice and Miſery; in ſuch Circumſtances, it was very agreeable to the natural Notions we have of the divine Goodneſs and Wiſdom, to ſuppoſe that He would make a farther Revelation to Mankind, which might give them a clearer Knowledge, and a ſtronger Senſe, of Duty; unleſs we will ſuppoſe that he had utterly abandon'd them.

They who think it had been moſt agreeable to the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, to have given Mankind one certain Rule from the beginning, which ſhould have been a ſufficient Guide to all future Generations, and that the *Need* of a *new* Revelation implies a want of Knowledge and Foreſight in God; ſeem to forget, that Man was created a *Free* Agent, and as ſuch *muſt* have it in his *Power* to fall into a ſtate of Degeneracy and Corruption. And when the generality of Mankind were actually fal'n into that State, the acquainting them by a ſpecial Revelation how they might be deliver'd out of it (how their Natures might be rectified, and themſelves reſtor'd to the Favour of God,) could not

ſurely

ſurely be any Derogation to the Characters of Wiſdom and Goodneſs. As well may we charge a Phyſician with want of Skill, for not treating the Sound and the Sick by one and the ſame Rule, and while he is finding out Remedies, and preſcribing Regulations, to reſtore a Conſtitution well nigh ruin'd by Debauchery and Exceſs, accuſe him for *ſuffering* the Patient, who was in a State of *Liberty* and *Freedom*, to run into thoſe pernicious Courſes: As well may a Prince, who proclaims Conditions of Pardon and Favour to his rebellious Subjects, be charg'd with want of Goodneſs; becauſe he did not chain them up from their Cradles, and lay them under an utter *Inability* to rebel.

I cannot forbear in this place, to take notice of the extreme Vanity and Preſumption of thoſe, who think themſelves at liberty to *diſregard* the Goſpel-Revelation, till God ſhall think fit to ſatisfy them, for what reaſon He did not make it *ſooner*, and why not to all Mankind *at once*. As if He were accountable to us for his Proceedings and Diſpenſations, and we at liberty to refuſe the Benefits or Deliverances He ſends, becauſe they come not at the time or in the manner that we judge moſt proper. Such Perſons may as well ask, Why he made us Men and not Angels? Why he did not bring us into the World with the perfect uſe of our Reaſon? Why he did not give to all Men the ſame Capacity and Leaſure to know and learn their Duty? Why he has appointed *different degrees* of Happineſs in the next Life? — If indeed it appear'd, that God would judge Men for the Tranſgreſſion of any Duty which they did not and could not know to be their Duty, and that he would make them *accountable* for not being influenc'd by Motives which he had never

never acquainted them with; it would be difficult to reconcile ſuch a Proceeding to the divine Juſtice. But ſince the contrary to this is true, and it is certain God will not puniſh Men for invincible Ignorance; ſurely He is at liberty to diſpenſe *Extraordinary Favours* at what Times, and in what Meaſures, to what Nations and to what Perſons, he thinks fit; and there can be no doubt, but ſuch Perſons and Nations are bound to receive them with all the Gratitude and Thankfulneſs that is due from Creatures to their Creator. Are we then to quarrel with God, that He raiſes us to greater Degrees of Perfection, in order to advance us to greater Degrees of Happineſs and Glory? Can there be a more flagrant Inſtance of Perverſeneſs, than to *refuſe* his Favours, for the very reaſon which ought to increaſe our Thankfulneſs for them, namely, that he vouchſafes them to *Us*, and not to *Others?* As to the Heathens, tho' the Light of Reaſon is but dim, yet they who have no better Light to walk by, and who honeſtly make uſe of that, as the only Guide God has given them, cannot fail to be mercifully dealt with by infinite Juſtice and Goodneſs. This is the foundation of St. *Paul*'s reaſoning upon the State of the Gentile World, That God did *not* then *leave himſelf* without *witneſs*: the regular returns of the *Seaſons* of the Year, and the former and latter Rain coming at their ſett times and bleſſing them with plentiful Harveſts, were viſible Evidences of his Providence and Goodneſs. And tho', notwithſtanding theſe Evidences, they fell into Idolatry, yet becauſe thoſe were *times of Ignorance*, in which they had no other Guide but the Light of Nature, God *winked at them*, or bore with them, and did not let looſe his Vengeance, utterly to deſtroy them.

Acts xiv. 16, 17. compar'd with xvii. 30, 31.

But

But now (upon the publication of the Goſpel, as St. *Paul* goes on) *he commandeth all men every where to Repent*; *Becauſe he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, by that man whom he hath ordained*; *whereof he hath given Aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* And they who have received this expreſs Command from God, and do not regard it, or, in other Words, they who enjoy the clear Light of the Goſpel, and perverſly reject it; inſtead of being entitl'd to Mercy, have their Guilt greatly aggravated, 'by ſhutting their Eyes againſt the Light he has given, 'by *defeating* the Meaſures he has ordain'd for their Salvation; 'by rejecting a Diſpenſation on no other account, but becauſe it is too pure and perfect, and 'by refuſing the Happineſs that God offers, for no other reaſon, but becauſe they will not come up to the Terms and Conditions upon which he offers it.

No leſs unreaſonable are they, who plead that if a Revelation is to be regarded, it ought to be made to every *Perſon*, or at leaſt to every *Age*. For a *Rule of Duty* is one and the ſame, to all Perſons and in all Ages; and when a ſtanding Teſt is once given to diſtinguiſh Truth from Error, it is equally a Teſt at all Times, and in all Places; ſuppoſing it to be convey'd to them with ſufficient Evidence of its coming from God. That this is the caſe of the Goſpel-Revelation, I have ſhewn you at large in my firſt Letter; and after God has given ſuch Evidence as is abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfy an ingenuous and unprejudic'd Mind, it is very unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that He is oblig'd to make every Age and every Country a Scene of new Miracles, only to ſatisfy the Diſingenuity and Obſtinacy of thoſe, who have already re-

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ceiv'd ſufficient Evidence, and yet will not be convinced. This is the foundation of what our Saviour ſays in the Parable of the Rich Man, *If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded tho' one roſe from the dead.* The *Spirit of Infidelity* is proof againſt all Argument and Conviction; and the *Jews* are a laſting Teſtimony, how little it avails to be *Eye-witneſſes* to Miracles, when Men have once reſolv'd to be Infidels.

Luke xvi. 31.

Since then a Revelation from God is not only poſſible, but alſo probable, and very agreeable to the divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs; and we live in a Country which avowedly acknowledges and embraces the *Goſpel-Revelation*; and it is certain, in fact, that the ſame has been acknowledged and embrac'd by many other Countries for above Sixteen Hundred Years, and ſtill continues to be ſo, as the great Foundation of Men's Happineſs both temporal, and eternal; to ſay in this Caſe, that they are not obliged, according to their ſeveral Abilities and Opportunities, to enquire whether ſuch a Revelation has been really made, and what grounds there are to believe that it came from God, is to ſay, that they are at liberty to renounce all the Rules of Reaſon and Prudence, as well as all Concern for the Safety and Welfare of Body and Soul.

V. *It is the Duty of Mankind to* Receive *for their Guide whatever Revelation comes from God*; *and alſo to receive it* whole *and* entire. What the Evidences are of the Goſpel-Revelation's coming from God, I have ſhewn at large in my former Letter; and I am ſo far from deſiring Men to reſt implicitly upon the Belief of any Age or Country, that the Deſign of the laſt head is to convince them of the Obligation they are under, to make a ſtrict *Enquiry* into

into thoſe Evidences, and to ſee whether they be ſuch as are fit for a reaſonable and impartial Mind to acquieſce in. And if upon Examination, the Evidences of the Fact appear to be full and ſtrong, and nothing be found in the Matter reveal'd, that is a *manifeſt* Contradiction in itſelf, or *evidently* inconſiſtent either with the divine Perfections, or with our natural Notions of Good and Evil; then I muſt add, that we are *bound* to receive it as a Rule of Faith and Practice, notwithſtanding any colourable Suggeſtions to the contrary; becauſe we are ſatisfied that it comes from God, who has a Right to give us a Rule, and who can give no Rule but what is true, and juſt, and good. So argues an accurate Reaſoner, upon this Head: 'Since God, 'in giving us the Light of Reaſon, has not 'thereby tied up his own hands from affording 'us, when he thinks fit, the Light of *Revela-* 'tion, in any of thoſe Matters wherein our Na- 'tural Faculties are able to give a *probable* De- 'termination; Revelation, where God has been 'pleas'd to give it, muſt carry it againſt the 'probable Conjectures of Reaſon. Becauſe the 'Mind not being *certain* of the Truth of that it 'does not *evidently* know, but only yielding to 'the *probability* that appears in it, is bound to 'give up its Aſſent to ſuch a Teſtimony, which, 'it is ſatisfied, comes from one who cannot err, 'and will not deceive.' For the ſame reaſon, we are not at liberty to admit ſome *part* of a Divine Revelation and reject the reſt; we may not, for Inſtance, receive the Improvements it makes in the moral Law, and, ſtopping there, reject or diſregard the Methods it provides for the Redemption of Mankind, nor the Ordinances and Inſtitutions it lays down for the Peace and Edification of the Church

Lock, Vol. I. p. 328.

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Locke, Vol. I. p. 328.

and every particular Member of it, nor, in general, any thing that it requires either to be believ'd or practis'd: Becauſe, if the whole appear to come from God, every part has equally the Stamp of divine Authority; and he who rejects any part, may for the ſame reaſon reject the whole.

And while I am ſhewing you the Obligation you are under to *receive* the Goſpel Revelation, it will be neceſſary that I caution you againſt *Scepticiſm*, or an unreaſonable *Difficulty* in believing, and ſuſpending the Aſſent of the Mind after it has receiv'd the proper grounds of Conviction. Such Scepticks are all they, who will not be content with thoſe ſorts of proof which things are capable of; for Inſtance, will not believe things which were done before their own Time, becauſe they did not ſee or hear them, or becauſe they are not prov'd to them by Mathematical Demonſtration, of which all hiſtorical Facts whatſoever are in their nature equally uncapable. Such alſo are they, who are ſo *partial* in giving their Aſſent, as to believe the Hiſtories of *Julius* and *Auguſtus Cæſar* without the leaſt Scruple, but are full of Doubts about the Hiſtory of *Jeſus Chriſt*, tho' ſupported by Evidences far more clear and numerous. To theſe may well be applied, what was ſaid by an excellent Writer, in relation to this Sceptical Humour: "Thoſe who will pretend "ſuch kind of Grounds for their diſbelief of "any thing, will never be able to perſwade "others, that the true cauſe why they do not "give their Aſſent, is not becauſe they have "no *Reaſon* for it, but becauſe they have no "*Mind* to it." We are naturally very uneaſy under a ſtate of *Suſpence* about any thing we like and care in earneſt to purſue; and

Dr. Will. Nat. Rel. p. 26.

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Men's willingneſs to continue in ſuſpence as to the truth of the Goſpel Revelation, is a certain ſign that it is a Buſineſs they do not like, nor care for. And altho' this is not downright Infidelity, yet it makes Men indifferent about Religion, and unactive in their Chriſtian Courſe, and takes off the *force* and *influence* of future Rewards and Puniſhments, almoſt as much as Infidelity itſelf.

VI. *Such, and ſo many, are the Excellencies of the Goſpel Revelation, that every wiſe and good Man muſt WISH it to be true; whether we conſider the Ends it propoſes, or the Means for attaining thoſe Ends.*

The great Ends it propoſes, are, 'The Perfection of human Nature, and the Happineſs of Mankind, 'To remove us from the ſtate of Brutes, and advance us to the perfection of Angels, and, upon the whole, 'To lay a ſure foundation for our Peace and Happineſs, both Temporal and Eternal.

The means it uſes for attaining thoſe great Ends, are of ſeveral ſorts. For Inſtance; Fierceneſs and Cruelty, and an unreſtrain'd enjoyment of ſenſual Pleaſures, being the diſtinguiſhing Characters of the Brutal Nature; the Goſpel Revelation abounds with Prohibitions of Anger, Malice, Hatred, Revenge, and the like brutal Qualities; and alſo lays the ſtrongeſt Reſtraints upon ſenſual Pleaſures and Delights, and ſtrictly forbids the enjoyment of them beyond the bounds it has ſet. And this, not only in the outward Acts, but alſo in the inward Thoughts, Imaginations, and Deſires; which corrupt the Soul, and keep it in a *diſpoſition* to Acts of Cruelty and Uncleanneſs, and in a readineſs to proceed to the exerciſe of them, whenever Provocations or Enticements come in the way.

See the firſt Letter, p. 11.

And theſe Prohibitions, duly attended to in the inward Deſires as well as outward Acts, at the ſame time that they ſet us above the Condition of Brutes, do alſo lay a Foundation for the Peace and Happineſs of our Lives; which Experience, as well as the univerſal Conſent of the wiſeſt Men in all Ages, proves to be interrupted and deſtroy'd by nothing ſo much, as the indulging unruly Luſts and Paſſions. And whereas, next to theſe, the Happineſs of this Life is greatly impair'd by Sickneſs, Want, Oppreſſion, and many other temporal Calamities; Chriſtianity provides for our Comfort under all theſe, not upon the Principles of the ancient Philoſophers, " Becauſe they are common to Mankind, and
11. " we cannot avoid them, and Death will " put an end to them; " but by aſſuring us, that they come from the Hand of a wiſe and good God, who can and will either deliver us from them or ſupport us under them, and that they are deſign'd by him to wean us from the Delights of this World, and to prepare us for the Enjoyment of a much better. Of the like Tendency, are the many Precepts of the Goſpel, which command us not to ſet our Hearts upon the Things of this World, but to purſue them with Moderation and Indifference, and a conſtant Reſignation to the Will of God; as theſe do not only prevent all the Vexation that otherwiſe attends the loſs of them and our Diſappointments about them, but alſo diſengage the Heart from them, and give it greater Liberty, as well as a readier Diſpoſition, to attend and purſue the Affairs of the next Life.

For tho' it is certain, that the Precepts of Chriſtianity greatly tend to our Comfort and Happineſs

Happineſs in this Life, it is as certain, that they are chiefly deſign'd to prepare us for the Happineſs of another. The Rules of the Philoſophers were many of them wiſely calculated for the Good of human Society and the Members of it in *this* World; but had by no means ſuch a direct tendency and relation to the Spiritual Enjoyments of the *next*, as appears to be the general Aim and Tenor of the Rules of the Goſpel. And as the Precepts of Chriſtianity are Preparations for a Happineſs of a very different Nature from that which any *worldly* Enjoyments afford, and have higher Views and nobler Ends than can be anſwer'd or attain'd by thoſe of meer Morality; in theſe reſpects, it was neceſſary that the Goſpel Precepts ſhould be built upon higher Principles than thoſe of Morality; and that they ſhould be of a more pure, refin'd, and exalted Nature, and enforced by higher and more noble Motives.

Accordingly, Chriſtianity firſt gives us a true Knowledge of the *Nature* of God; that it is not impure as the greateſt part of the Heathens believ'd, nor yet ſevere and Terrible, according to the general Tenor of the Jewiſh Diſpenſation, as given to a *ſtiffneck'd* and *obſtinate* People; but that He is a Being of a pure Spiritual Nature, and is kind to us, and loves to do us good, and has given the higheſt Proof of it in ſending his own Son to die for us and redeem us from eternal Death, to the end He might engage our Love and Obedience to Him, and we by that means procure eternal Happineſs to ourſelves. And by this Knowledge of his Nature, we are led to ſee, that he muſt not be worſhipped according to the impure Rites of the Heathen Services, nor yet by the Sacrifices of Beaſts, which were only *Types*

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of our Redemption by Chriſt; but with a ſteady Attention of the Soul, and a pure Heart, and ſincere Intentions and Reſolutions of Obedience; which our Saviour briefly expreſſes by worſhipping God in *Spirit and in Truth*, and which has a natural Tendency to fit us for the divine Exerciſes of Praiſe and Contemplation in the next Life, and, in the mean while, is a means of preſerving a conſtant Communication between God and us, during our continuance in this World.

Joh. iv. 23.

To the ſame *Spiritual* Ends, tend all the Duties of Life which are either peculiar to the Chriſtian Inſtitution, or at leaſt are carried by it to greater Degrees of Purity and Perfection. Such are, with regard to *ourſelves*; Holineſs of Heart; a ſober uſe of the Enjoyments of Life, with Mortifications and Self-denials as we find occaſion; an Indifference about the Things of this World, compar'd with our Care about the Things of the next; *the ſeeking thoſe Things which are above, where Chriſt ſittteth at the Right Hand of God*; the *having our Converſation in heaven*, the *laying up our Treaſure in heaven*, and the keeping a ſtrict Watch over our *Thoughts* as well as Actions. With regard to our *Neighbour*, The forgiveneſs of Injuries, the loving of Enemies, the doing all the good we can to Men for God's Sake, the bleſſing them that curſe us, the praying for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us, and the overcoming evil with good. The Precepts which relate to ourſelves, prepare us for Heaven, as it is a Place of *pure ſpiritual* Enjoyments; and thoſe which relate to our Neighbour, prepare us for it, as it is a Place where Love, and Peace, and Unity reign, to the greateſt Degree, and in the higheſt Perfection. And whereas not only the Heathen but alſo the

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Jewiſh Worſhip conſiſted chiefly in outward Rites and Ordinances; there are no more than two of that ſort in our Saviour's Inſtitution, and thoſe very plain and ſignificant; Baptiſm, by which we are admitted into the Society of Chriſtians, and all the Advantages of it; and the Lord's Supper, by which we declare our Continuance in that Society; thankfully commemorating the great Work of our Redemption by Chriſt, and applying to our ſelves the Comforts and Benefits of it; and at the ſame time, reſolving to live as *becomes* His Diſciples, and receiving *Spiritual Strength* to ſupport us in that Reſolution.

But becauſe, by reaſon of the Corruption of our Hearts, we are not naturally diſpos'd to Spiritual Exerciſes, and the greateſt part of Mankind have their Thoughts employ'd about the Buſineſs or the Pleaſures of this World, and are daily expos'd to Temptations of one kind or another; all which indiſpoſe them for Devotion, and make them ignorant or unmindful of their Duty, and very apt to fall into the Tranſgreſſion of it; As a fit Remedy for theſe Evils, the Goſpel Inſtitution has appointed a *publick Worſhip*, which every Chriſtian is bound to attend, and a peculiar Order of Men to explain to the People their Duty, and remind them of it, and to *preſs* and *enforce* the ſeveral Obligations they are under to perform it.

See the firſt Letter, p. 46.

And ſince the Paſſions and Appetites of Men lead them ſtrongly to ſenſual Gratifications and Delights, and the Self-denials which the Goſpel requires are ſo diſagreeable to weak and corrupt Nature, that it is in vain to hope that Mankind will be kept to their Duty in either of theſe Reſpects by meer Reaſoning and Exhortation;

hortation; the Goſpel Revelation has provided a balance to our natural Weakneſs and Corruption, by giving us the *ſtrongeſt Aſſurances* of Rewards and Puniſhments in another World; the one to deter us from gratifying our unruly Paſſions and inordinate Appetites, and the other, to carry us with chearfulneſs and reſolution thro' all the Self-denials which the Goſpel requires.

And as the *Love* of God is the higheſt Principle of Duty and Obedience to him, ſo the Goſpel gives us the ſtrongeſt and moſt forcible *Motive* to love him; namely, the ſending his own Son into the World to die for us, and by his Death to reconcile us to himſelf, and make us eternally happy.

And as in all Caſes, *Example* has a very powerful Influence, in order to Practice; We have in our Saviour's Life the moſt perfect Pattern of Goodneſs, that ever the World beheld; of Meekneſs and Humility, of Patience and Contentment, of loving to do good to Men, and of an entire Obedience and Submiſſion to the Will of God.

Since alſo the Chriſtian Inſtitution, which ſo freely and openly condemns the Wickedneſs of the World, expoſes the ſincere Profeſſors of it to Reproach and Perſecution; Chriſt has arm'd and fortified them againſt theſe, not only by general Declarations of his acceptance of the Services of thoſe who *Confeſs him before men*, and are *reproach'd and perſecuted for his ſake*; but alſo by ſpecial Promiſes, that he will particularly *Confeſs them before God and his Angels*, and that *great ſhall be their Reward in heaven*; which his Apoſtles expreſs, *by reigning with him*, and by *receiving from his hands a Crown of Life*.

Mat. x. 32.

Mat. v. 11, 12.

2 Tim. ii. 12.

Jam. i. 12.

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And becauſe the ſenſe of our natural Corruption and Infirmity might well diſcourage us from *attempting* to live up to the pure and ſpiritual Precepts of the Goſpel, and to bring our Hearts to a thorow liking of them, and an habitual Obedience to them; therefore the ſame Goſpel enſures a *Supernatural Aſſiſtance* to all thoſe who ſhall deſire and pray for it, to ſupport them againſt Temptations, and preſerve in them a conſtant deſire and endeavour to conform their Lives to the Laws of Chriſt. *If ye*, ſays our Saviour, *being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the* Holy Spirit *to them that ask him*: By which Spirit, our Natures are *renewed*, and our Hearts *ſanctify'd*; and by the ſame Spirit we are *ſtrengthen'd with might in the inner man.*

Luke xi. 13.

Rom. xii. 2.

Rom. vi. 13.

Epheſ. iii. 16.

And, finally, becauſe Men, thro' a conſciouſneſs of their manifold Offences againſt God, would be in perpetual dread of the Divine Juſtice, and, in a ſenſe of their great Failings and Infirmities, would think themſelves unworthy to approach a Being of infinite Purity, and deſpair of recovering his Favour when they have offended him by the tranſgreſſion of their Duty; therefore, to comfort ſincere Chriſtians, and encourage them to perſevere in their Duty, the Son of God who took our Nature upon him, hath ſatisfy'd the Divine Juſtice by dying for us, and is appointed the Interceſſor between God and Man, and the Mediator of a New Covenant; by which, all who ſincerely deſire and endeavour to perform their Duty, are not only aſſur'd of Supernatural Aſſiſtance to enable them to diſcharge it, but alſo upon a ſincere Repentance, and Faith in him, are *Entitl'd*

titl'd to Pardon and Forgiveneſs if they tranſgreſs it, and aſſur'd that upon thoſe Terms they ſhall be reſtor'd to the Favour of God, and the comfortable Hope of Eternal Life, notwithſtanding ſuch Tranſgreſſions.

This is the account which the New Teſtament gives, of the Redemption wrought for us by Chriſt: 'That his Death was a *Satisfaction* made to the Divine Juſtice for the Sins of Mankind; 'That thro' Faith in him, we are aſſur'd of the *Forgiveneſs* of our Sins upon our Repentance and Amendment; 'That being forgiven, we are *juſtify'd* in the ſight of God; 'That being juſtify'd in his ſight, we are *reconcil'd* to him; 'That he who reconciles us to God, *ſanctifies* our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, to enable us to perform the Will of God, and thereby to *continue* in his favour; 'That for the ſame end, he *Mediates* and *Intercedes* for us with God, while we continue in this preſent Life; and, 'That thro' him we have the promiſe of *Life Eternal.*" This is a Scene full of Comfort to all thoſe who comply with the Terms of the Goſpel; and, that good Chriſtians may be aſſured that this is the true Account, and that by Conſequence the Hope and Comfort they build upon the Redemption wrought for them by Chriſt, and their Truſt in him, are well founded; I will give them in one View, and in the Words of Scripture, what is plainly deliver'd there, upon each of the forementioned Heads.

1. Chriſt, by his Death, made SATISFACTION to the DIVINE JUSTICE for the Sins of Mankind. This the Scripture ſets forth by the Expreſſions, 'Of dying *for us*, 'Of *bearing* our Sins, 'Of *taking away* our Sins,

'Of

'Of being a *Propitiation* for our Sins, 'Of *Purchasing* and *Redeeming* or *Ransoming* us with the Price of his Blood.

— By dying FOR *us.*]— *He laid down his Life* for *us* — *He died* for *our Sins* — *He gave himself* for *us* — *He was deliver'd* for *our Offences* — *He tasted Death* for *every Man.* Agreeably to the Prophecy concerning him, *He was wounded* for *our Transgressions, he was bruised* for *our Iniquities.* 1 John iii. 16. 1 Cor. xv. 3. 1 John iii. 16. Rom. iv. 25. Heb. ii. 9.

— By BEARING our Sins.]— † *He was once offer'd to* bear *the Sins of many* — *He* bare *our Sins in his own Body on the Tree* — Agreeably to the Prophecies concerning him, *He hath* born *our Griefs and* carried *our Sorrows* — *The Lord hath* laid on him *the Iniquity of us all.* Isa. liii. 5. † Heb. ix. 26. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Isa. liii. 4. Isa. liii. 6.

— By TAKING AWAY our Sins.]— *He was manifested to* take away *our Sins* — *He* put away *Sin by the Sacrifice of himself* — *He hath* wash'd *us from our Sins in his own blood* — *The Blood of Jesus Christ* cleanseth *us from all Sin.* 1 John iii. 5. Heb. ix. 26. Rev. i. 5. 1 John i. 17.

— By being a PROPITIATION for our Sins.]— *Him God hath set forth to be a* Propitiation *thro' Faith in his blood* — *God sent his Son to be the* Propitiation *for our Sins* — *He is the* Propitiation *for our Sins, and not for our's only, but also for the Sins of the whole World.* Rom. iii. 25. 1 John iv. 10. 1 John ii. 2.

— By PURCHASING, and REDEEMING or RANSOMING us, with the Price of his Blood.]— *He* purchas'd *the Church of God with his own blood* — *He came to give his life a* Ransom *for many* — *He gave himself a* Ransom *for all* — *We are* bought *with a price* — *In him we have* Redemption *thro* Acts xx. 28. Mat. xx. 28. 1 Tim. ii. 6. 1 Cor. vi. 20.

Ephes. i. 7. Col. iii. 4.

Rev. v. 9. 1 Pet. i. 18. *thro' his blood—He hath* redeemed *us to God by his blood—We are* redeem'd *with the precious blood of Chriſt.*

2. The divine Juſtice being Satisfied, we are aſſur'd of the FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS thro' Chriſt upon a ſincere *Repentance.* Luke iii. 3. His Fore-runner, *John* the Baptiſt, preach'd *the baptiſm of Repentance for* the Remiſſion of Sins.—Chriſt tell us, *His Blood was ſhed for many for the* Remiſſion of Sins.—After the Reſurrection, the Luk. xxiv. 47. Apoſtles are directed by Him, *to preach Repentance and* Remiſſion of Sins *in his Name, among all Nations.*— Accordingly, their Preaching was Acts v. 31. this: *Him God hath exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance to* Iſrael, *and* forgiveneſs of Sins— *Repent* Acts ii. 38. *and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the* remiſſion of Sins— *Thro'* Acts xiii. 38. *this Man is preach'd unto you the* forgiveneſs Acts x. 43. of Sins— *To him give all the Prophets witneſs,* 2 Cor. v. 19. *that* thro' his name *whoſoever* believeth *in him ſhall receive* remiſſion of Sins— *God was in Chriſt* Epheſ. i. 7. *reconciling the World unto himſelf, not* imputing *their treſpaſſes unto them— In him we have Redemption thro' his blood, even the* forgiveneſs of Sins— Epheſ. iv. 32. And we are commanded to *forgive one another, even as God,* for Chriſt's Sake, *hath forgiven us.*

3. Our Sins being forgiven, we are JUSTIFIED by Chriſt in the Sight of God. *By* Acts xiii. 39. *him all that believe are* juſtified— *We are* juſtified *in the name of the Lord Jeſus.—We are* juſtified *freely by his Grace, thro' the Redemption* 1 Cor. vi. 11. *that is in Jeſus Chriſt.— Being* juſtified *by his* Rom. iii. 24. *blood, we ſhall be ſaved from wrath thro' him—* Rom. v. 9. *God hath made him to be* Sin *for us, who knew* 2 Cor. v. 21. *no ſin, that we might be made the* Righteouſneſs *of God in him—Even the* Righteouſneſs

of

of God, which is by Faith of Jeſus Chriſt unto all and upon all them that believe. Rom. iii. 22.

4. Being juſtified by Chriſt, we are RECONCIL'D to God. *Being juſtified by Faith, we have* Peace *with God, thro' our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* — *We are* reconcil'd *to God by the Death of his Son.* — *Us, who were Enemies, hath Chriſt* reconcil'd *in the body of his fleſh, thro' Death.* — *He hath made peace thro' the Blood of his Croſs, by him to* reconcile *all things unto himſelf.* — *God hath* reconciled *us to himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt*; — *Who ſuffer'd for Sin, that he might* bring us *unto God.* — And, *we are* accepted *in the Beloved.* Rom. v. 2. Rom. v. 10. Col. i. 21. Col. i. 20. 2 Cor. v. 18. 1 Pet. iii. 18. Epheſ. i. 6.

5. Having reconciled us to God, he SANCTIFIES our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, to enable us to perform our Duty, and thereby to continue in God's favour. — *We are choſen to Salvation, thro'* Sanctification *of the Spirit.* — and *thro'* Sanctification *of the Spirit, unto Obedience.* — *We are* ſanctified, *thro' the offering of the body of Jeſus Chriſt.* — *God hath not call'd us to uncleanneſs, but unto* holineſs,—*who hath alſo given unto us his* Holy Spirit.— *The* Spirit of God *dwelleth in us,*— and *our Body is the* Temple *of the* Holy Ghoſt, and *we are an habitation of God thro' the* Spirit.— *We are* renew'd *by the Holy* Ghoſt — and quicken'd *by the* Spirit — and ſtrengthen'd *with might by the* Spirit *in the inner man.* — And *it is thro' the* Spirit *that we mortify the deeds of the body* — by which deeds, *we* grieve *and* quench *the Spirit.* 2 Theſ. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 2. Heb. x. 10. 1 Theſ. iv. 7, 8. Rom. viii. 9. 1 Cor. vi. 19. Epheſ. ii. 22. Acts ii. 38. Joh. vi. 63. Epheſ. iii. 16. Rom. viii. 13.

6. He who aſſiſts us by his Spirit upon Earth, to enable us to do the Will of God, and thereby to continue in his favour, is our conſtant MEDIATOR, INTERCESSOR, and ADVOCATE with God in Heaven, to preſent Eph. iv. 30. 1 Theſ. v. 19. Luke xi. 13.

ſent our Prayers for the ſupply of our Wants, and to obtain a compaſſionate regard to our Failings and Infirmities. *He is the* Mediator *of the New Covenant.* — *There is one* Mediator *between God and Man, even the man Chriſt Jeſus.* — *He makes* Interceſſion *for us at the right hand of God.* — *He* appears *in the* preſence *of God for us.* — *No man cometh unto the Father but* by him — He *is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt who come unto God* by him, *ſeeing he ever liveth to make* Interceſſion *for them.* — *If any man* Sin, *we have an* Advocate *with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the Righteous.* — He *is touch'd with the feeling of our* Infirmities, and therefore *let us come* boldly to the Throne of Grace, *that we may find grace and mercy to help in time of need* — and *let us* draw near *with a true heart, and full* aſſurance of Faith. — *In him we have* boldneſs, *and* acceſs *with confidence.*

Heb. xii. 24. 1 Tim. ii. 5. Rom. viii. 34. Heb. ix. 24. John xiv. 6. Heb. vii. 25. 1 John ii. 1, 2. Heb. iv. 14. Heb. x. 22. Epheſ. iii. 12.

7. As it is he, who enables us to do the Will of God and to preſerve his Favour in this Life, ſo it is *through him* that we are made partakers of LIFE ETERNAL: *The Father ſent the Son to be the* Saviour *of the World* — *to* ſeek *and to* ſave *that which was loſt* — *that we might* live *through him* — *that the World* thro' *him might be* ſav'd,— *that* believing, *we might have life* thro' his name,— *that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not* periſh, *but have* everlaſting Life.— Through *him we are* ſaved *from* wrath.— *He hath delivered us from the* Wrath *to come.*— Eternal Life *is the gift of God,* thro' *Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* — *God hath given us Eternal Life, and this Life is* in his Son, — *who is the* Captain *of our Salvation* — *the* Author *of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him* : — *Neither is there* Salvation *in any other* ; *for there is*

Joh. iv. 14. Luke xix. 10. 1 John iv. 9. John xx. 31. Joh. iii. 17. Joh. xx. 31. 1 Theſ. i. 10 Joh iii. 15. Rom. v. 9. Rom. vi. 23. 1 Joh. v. 11. Heb. ii. 10. Heb. v. 9. Acts iv. 12.

none

none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we muſt be ſaved.

What has been ſaid under this Sixth general Head, is a ſhort View of the Chriſtian Inſtitution, both in the Ends it propoſes, and the Means for attaining thoſe Ends; and it appears in this View, that the Method which the Goſpel lays down for our Salvation, is throughout a conſiſtent and uniform Scheme, worthy of God, and contriv'd with the greateſt Wiſdom and Goodneſs for the Comfort and Happineſs of Man. It appears alſo, how unable human Reaſon was, to direct us either to the *Ends*, or the *Means*, and that however the due Uſe and Application of our Reaſon may anſwer the Purpoſes of this Life, it is by no means ſufficient to guide us in our way to the next.

But if, after God has made ſo full and clear a Revelation in what way and upon what terms he will ſave us, Men will reſolve to be their own Guides, and refuſe to be ſav'd in the way that he has appointed; this is at their own peril. If ſome will believe, that truſting in Chriſt is their *whole* Duty, and ſo excuſe themſelves from the Obſervation of the moral Law, and others will affirm that the Obſervation of the moral Law is ſufficient, and ſo will forgo the Benefit of Chriſt's Redemption; if ſome will contend that Chriſt has done all, and others that he has done nothing: to both theſe it is ſufficient to ſay, that they are very vain and preſumptuous in ſetting up the Opinion and Imagination of weak and fallible Men, againſt the infallible Teſtimony of Perſons ſent and inſpir'd by God. The Goſpel-Account is as full and expreſs as words can make it, on one hand,

hand, That Faith in Christ is the Foundation of a Christian's *Title* to Heaven, and on the other hand, That Repentance and good Works are necessary Conditions of *obtaining* it.

It may not be improper, before I shut up this Head, to observe that several of our most eminent Divines after the Restoration, set themselves both by Preaching and Writing to enlarge upon the Importance of Moral Duties, and to recommend them with great Earnestness to the Regard of the People; to such a degree, as to stand charg'd by others with too great a Disregard of the Doctrines and Duties peculiar to Christianity. Whereas, the Case in reality was this. During the Times of Confusion, many of the Preachers had not only forborn to inculcate the Duties of Morality, but had labour'd to depreciate them; to perswade the People that Faith was All, and Works Nothing. And therefore the Clergy after the Restoration, in order to take off those unhappy Impressions, found themselves oblig'd to inculcate with more than ordinary Diligence, the Necessity of moral Duties in the Christian Life, and to labour to restore them to their proper Share in the Christian Scheme. But those of them, who with the honest View I have mention'd, labour'd the most zealously in that way, were at the same time as zealous to explain to the People the great Work of our Redemption by *Jesus Christ*, as the Means of Salvation which God has appointed: [a] The Corruption and Misery into which Mankind was sunk by the Fall of our first Parents; [b] The necessity of a Mediator, to recover them, and restore them to the favour of

Dr. Wilkins, Barrow, Tillotson, Scot.

[a] Till. vol. III. 303, 320, 321, 589. Bar. Vol. I. 464. V. II. 222. Vol. III. 228.

[b] Till. Vol. II. 129. Scot, Vol. I. 201. Vol. III. 6.

of God; 'c The Incarnation of the Son of God for that end; 'd The Goodneſs of God in appointing his own Son to be the Mediator between Him and Us; 'e The Comfort of having a Mediator of our own Nature; 'f The Expiation made for Sin by the Suffering of Chriſt; 'g The Wiſdom of God in making Chriſt a Sacrifice for Sin; 'h The ineſtimable value of his Sufferings, for the Redemption of all Mankind; 'i Our Juſtification by Faith in him, k and Sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and l his Interceſſion for us at God's right hand. In general; what can be more expreſs, than the Doctrine laid down by m Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*, concerning our Redemption by Chriſt, 'That 'Men are to place all their Hope and Confidence 'of Salvation in Jeſus Chriſt the Son of God; 'that is, to believe that thro' the alone Merit 'of his Death and Sufferings, God is reconcil'd 'to us; and that, only upon the Account of the 'Satisfaction which he hath made to divine Ju'ſtice, we are reſtor'd to the Favour of God, 'and our Sins are pardon'd to us, and we have 'a Title to eternal Life. Not but that there 'are *Conditions* on our Part to make us capable 'of theſe Benefits, Faith and Repentance and 'ſincere Obedience and Holineſs of Life, with'out which we ſhall never be made Partakers 'of them; but that the Satisfaction of Chriſt is 'the only *meritorious* Cauſe of thoſe Bleſſings.'

And together with the ſeveral Heads of our Redemption by Chriſt, thus explain'd and enlarg'd upon by thoſe who had moſt diſtinguiſh'd themſelves in preſſing the Duties of Morality; the People were further inſtructed by the ſame Perſons, That Baptiſm is an Initiation into a new Covenant with God; and the Lord's Sup-

c Till. vol. I. 437, 460. V. II. 261. Bar. V. II. 235.
d Till. v. I. 445. Scot. V. III. 24, 42.
e Till. vol. I. p. 471.
f Till. v. I. 477. V. II. 361. Scot, v. III. 187.
g Till. v. I. 473. v. II. 637. Bar. v. I. 464. v. II. 339. Scot, vol. III. 167.
h Bar. v. II. 313. v. III. 454.
i Til. v. III. 480. Bar, v. II. 71.
k Till. v. III. 300, 320, 488, 489. Scot, v. III. 83, 151, 164.
l Scot, v. III. 183.
m Vol. II. p. 488.

Scot, Vol. II. 296. v. III. 283.

per, a Renewal of that Covenant; and they were admoniſh'd by them, [n] of the great Duties of aſſembling in the publick Worſhip of God, and [o] frequently receiving the Holy Sacrament, and [p] hearing and reading the Holy Scriptures, as their only ſure and complete Rule both of Faith and Practice. Concerning all which, [q] one of thoſe Writers, after having deſcrib'd in a lively manner the Excellencies of Moral Duties, goes on thus: 'The *Poſitive* Parts of Religion are our Duty as well as theſe, and God by his Soveraign Authority exacts them at our hands; and unleſs, when Jeſus Chriſt hath been ſufficiently propos'd to us, we do ſincerely *believe* in him— unleſs we ſtrike Covenant with him by *Baptiſm*, and frequently renew that Covenant in the *Lord's Supper*— unleſs we diligently attend on the *publick Aſſemblies* of his Worſhip— there is no pretence of *Morality* will bear us out, when we appear before his dread Tribunal.' To which I muſt add, that another of thoſe Divines, who wrote an excellent Treatiſe of *Natural Religion* (*i. e.* of Principles and Duties *merely moral*, and ſuch as are diſcoverable by the Strength of Reaſon exerted and improv'd to the higheſt degree that our natural Faculties are capable of) concludes with the fulleſt Declaration of the *Inſufficiency* of them to inſtruct us in our Duty, or to enable us to perform it, or to conduct us to Happineſs, without thoſe clear Lights and Supernatural Aſſiſtances which the Goſpel-Diſpenſation conveys to us. His words are theſe. "Notwithſtanding all "that can be ſaid of *Natural Religion*, it "cannot be denied, but that in this dark "and degenerate State into which Mankind "is

[n] Till. v. I. 519, 537. Scot, v. II. 115.
[o] Till. v. I. 248 Scot, v. II. 294.
[p] Till. v. I. 308. v. II. 243.
[q] Scot, v. II. 68.
Dr. Wilkins, l. 2. c. 9.

" is ſunk, there is great want of a clearer " Light to diſcover our Duty to us with " greater Certainty, and to put it beyond all " doubt and diſpute what is the good and " acceptable Will of God; and of a more " powerful Encouragement to the Practice of " our Duty, by the Promiſe of a Supernatu- " ral Aſſiſtance, and by the Aſſurance of a " great and eternal Reward. And all theſe " Defects are fully ſupplied by that clear " and perfect Revelation, which God hath " made to the World by our bleſſed Saviour. "

And elſewhere he ſays, ' It is not the mere ' Performance of ſuch *moral* Duties as are of ' Natural Obligation, unleſs they be done in ' Obedience to Chriſt as our *Lord* and *Law-giver*, ' and in reliance upon him for his Pardon and ' Acceptance as our *Prieſt* and *Saviour*, that can ' make us acceptable to Chriſt, or entitle us to ' the Name of Chriſtians. Wilk. Serm. P. 51.

And ſpeaking of the Salvation of thoſe Heathens who liv'd according to the Light of Nature, (' That when ' God hath not thought fit to tell *us*, how He ' will be pleas'd to deal with ſuch Perſons, it ' is not fit for us to tell *Him* how He *ought* to ' deal with them; ') he adds; ' Only, of this ' we are ſufficiently aſſured, that in all *Ages* ' and *Places* of the World, all that are ſaved, ' are ſaved by the Mercy of God, and by the ' *Merits* of Jeſus Chriſt, who is the *Lamb* ſlain ' from the *foundation of the world*; the Scrip- ' ture having expreſly told us, *That there is no* ' *Salvation in any other*; *for there is none other* ' *name under heaven given among men, whereby we* ' *muſt be ſaved.* ' Nat. Rel. P. 397. So alſo, Bar. V. III. P. 449, 464.

I have already obſerv'd, that the Duties of Morality were carried by our Saviour to much higher Degrees of Purity and Perfection, than had been practiſed before either by *Jew* or *Gentile*; agreeably to the *pure* and *ſpiritual* Nature of that Happineſs which he reveal'd to Mankind, and the neceſſity of fitting the Soul for the full Enjoyment of it in the next Life, by habituating ourſelves to it, during our Abode in this. And for the ſame end, we find throughout the New Teſtament the Practice of Moral Duties enforc'd, and the breach of them diſcourag'd, not ſo much from Conſiderations relating to this World, or any *temporal* Benefit accruing from thence to ourſelves or others, as 'From the *Sanctions* of Duty, which the Civil Relations among *Men* have receiv'd from *God*, 'From the manner of *God's* Dealings with Men, 'From the Example of *Chriſt*, our Lord and Maſter, 'From the Regard we owe to our *Holy* Profeſſion, 'From the Relation we bear to *Heaven* while we live here upon Earth, 'From the different Spiritual *Sources* of Moral and Immoral Actions, and, 'From the Influence which our Regard or Diſregard to the Duties of Morality, will have upon our *future* State.

—From the *Sanctions* of Duty, which the Civil Relations among Men have receiv'd from GOD.

Rom. i. 2, 5. Magiſtrates muſt be obey'd, not only *for wrath*, but for *conſcience*-ſake, becauſe they are the *Ordinance* of God; and they muſt alſo conduct themſelves towards the People, *as the Miniſters of* God *to them for good*. Husband and Wife muſt inviolably adhere to each other, becauſe

Rom. i. 4.

Mat. xix. 4, 6.

becauſe they are join'd together and made one by *God*, who *at the beginning made them male and female*, and by whom *whoremongers and adulterers will be judg'd.* Servants are commanded to be obedient to their Maſters *in ſingleneſs of heart, fearing* God; *with good will doing ſervice as to the* Lord, *and not unto men*; and Maſters, to be juſt and merciful to their Servants, as knowing *that they alſo have a* Maſter *in Heaven.* And, in general, *Whatſoever we do*, the Goſpel enjoins us to do it *heartily, as to the* Lord, *and not unto men*; and that *whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of* God.

Mat. xix. 4. Heb. xiii. 4. Epheſ. vi. 6, 7. Col. iii. 22. Epheſ. vi. 9. Col. iii. 23. 1 Cor. x. 31.

— From the manner of GOD's Dealings with Men. We muſt be kind to Enemies as well as Friends, becauſe God *maketh his Sun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt.* We muſt forgive one another, *becauſe* God *for* Chriſt's *ſake hath forgiven us.* And upon God's having manifeſted his Love to us in *ſending his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live thro' him*, is grounded the Inference which St. *John* makes, *Beloved, if* God *ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another*; and the *loving* one another, is the moſt conſtant and forcible Motive of *good Offices* to one another.

Mat. v. 44. Epheſ. iv. 32. 1 John iv. 9. 1 John iv. 11.

— From the Example of CHRIST our Lord and Maſter. *Learn of me*, ſays he, *for I am meek and lowly, and ye ſhall find reſt to your Souls*: And, ſays the Apoſtle, *Walk in Love, as* Chriſt *alſo loved us, and gave himſelf for us.* — *Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification*; *for even* Chriſt *pleas'd not himſelf.* — *Let nothing be done thro' ſtrife or vain-glory, but in lowlineſs*

Mat. xi. 29. Epheſ. v. 2. Rom. xv. 2, 3. Phil. ii. 3, 4, 5.

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— From the manner of GOD's Dealings with Men. We muſt be kind to Enemies as well as Friends, becauſe God *maketh his Sun to riſe on the evil and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt.* We muſt forgive one another, *becauſe* God *for* Chriſt's *ſake hath forgiven us.* And upon God's having manifeſted his Love to us in *ſending his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live thro' him*, is grounded the Inference which St. *John* makes, *Beloved, if* God *ſo loved us, we ought alſo to love one another*; and the *loving* one another, is the moſt conſtant and forcible Motive of *good Offices* to one another.

Mat. v. 44. Epheſ. iv. 32. 1 John iv. 9. 1 John iv. 11.

— From the Example of CHRIST our Lord and Maſter. *Learn of me*, ſays he, *for I am meek and lowly, and ye ſhall find reſt to your Souls.* And, ſays the Apoſtle, *Walk in Love, as* Chriſt *alſo loved us, and gave himſelf for us.* — *Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbour for his good to edification*; *for even* Chriſt *pleas'd not himſelf.* — *Let nothing be done thro' ſtrife or vain-glory, but in lowlineſs*

Mat. 11. 29. Epheſ. v. 2. Rom. xv. 2, 3. Phil. ii. 3, 4, 5.

lowlineſs of mind let each eſteem other better than themſelves: Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others; Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt
1 Pet. i. 15. Jeſus. — *As he that hath call'd you, is* Holy, *ſo be ye* Holy *in all manner of Converſation.*

— From the regard we owe to our HOLY PROFESSION. Immoralities of all kinds are forbidden to Chriſtians, becauſe they ought to
Epheſ. iv. 1, 2, 3. walk *worthy of the* Vocation *wherewith they are call'd; with all lowlineſs and meekneſs, with long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond*
1 Theſ. ii. 12. *of Peace.* — *They muſt walk* worthy of God, *who hath call'd them to his Kingdom and Glory.*
Epheſ. v. 8. —*They muſt walk as Children of* Light. — *Their*
Phil. i. 27. *Converſation muſt be as becomes the* Goſpel *of*
Tit. ii. 10. Chriſt. — *They muſt* adorn *the* Doctrine *of* God *our Saviour in all things*; and take care that
1 Tim. vi. 1. the Name *of* God *and his* Doctrine *be not blaſphem'd*, or evil ſpoken of, *among the Gentiles,*
Tit. ii. 5. through them. — We are to *walk* honeſtly (or
Rom. xiii. 13, 14. decently) *as in the day* (the Day-light of the Goſpel) *not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envying*; and we muſt put *on the* Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *and make no proviſion for the fleſh, to fulfil the luſts thereof.*

— From the relation we bear to HEAVEN,
Phil. iii. 20. *while we live here upon* Earth. — *Our* Converſation (or Citizenſhip) *is in* Heaven; and be-
1 Pet. ii. 11. cauſe we are only *ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth*, we muſt *abſtain from fleſhly luſts* (the inordinate Enjoyments of this World) *which war againſt the* Soul; and we are alſo put in
Heb. xi. 16. mind that we are only *ſojourners* here, and have

no

no continuing City, but ſeek one to come, that we may not ſet up our reſt in this World, nor be too ſollicitous about the Things of it, but may have our heavenly Country always in our Eye, and make it our greateſt Concern to arrive ſafely there.

—From the different Spiritual SOURCES of Moral and Immoral Actions. *Love, Peace, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Meekneſs, Temperance*, are recommended to our Practice, as *fruits of the* Spirit, and as the *Wiſdom that is* from above, *which is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits.* But *Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Laſciviouſneſs, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Envying, Murders, Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like*, are repreſented by the Goſpel, as *works of the* fleſh, and the fruits of that Wiſdom *which deſcendeth not from above, but is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh*; as proceeding from the Corruptions of Nature without the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and from the Suggeſtions of the Devil, of whom the Goſpel every where warns us as an implacable Enemy to Mankind, *who walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour*, and whoſe *wiles* and *ſnares* we muſt not hope to eſcape, but by watchfulneſs and prayer.

Gal. v. 22, 23. Jam. iii. 17. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. Jam. iii. 15. 1 Pet. v. 8. Epheſ. vi. 11, 18. 2 Tim. ii. 26.

—From the Influence which our regard or diſregard to the Duties of Morality will have upon our FUTURE STATE. St. *Paul* concludes a large Catalogue of Sins, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Wrath, Envy, *&c.* with this juſt but terrible Sentence, *Of which, I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of*

Gal. v. 21.

of God. On the contrary, the Goſpel recommends the practice of Humility, by enſuring to it *the Kingdom of Heaven*; Meekneſs, becauſe it is *in the ſight of God of great Price*; Mercifulneſs, as the Means of *obtaining Mercy*; Temperance, as neceſſary to the running our *Chriſtian Courſe* with Succeſs; Purity of Heart, as a neceſſary Preparation to the *ſeeing God*; Charity, as it is the *laying up in ſtore for our ſelves a good Foundation againſt the time to come, that we may attain Eternal Life*; Patience, and Perſeverance in well doing, becauſe our *light Affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of* Glory; *While we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are* not ſeen, *becauſe the things which are ſeen, are* Temporal, *but the things which are not ſeen, are* Eternal.

Mat. v. 3. 1 Pet. iii. 4. Mat. v. 7. 1 Cor. ix. 25. Mat. v. 8. 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

This is the true Goſpel-Morality; which makes all the Relations among Men, and the Duties belonging to them, to center in God, and connects the Offices of this Life with the Happineſs of the next; and it is no other in effect, than that which St. *Paul* more briefly lays down in the following words: *The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appear'd to all Men, Teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, we ſhould live* Soberly, Righteouſly *and* Godly *in this preſent World; Looking for that bleſſed* Hope *and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and* purify *unto himſelf a peculiar People, zealous* of good Works.

Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13, 14.

I am

I am aware, that in the View of Chriſtianity I have given under this Sixth general Head, many things are laid down, which ſome late Writers, who yet diſown the Name of Infidels, have with much Confidence pronounc'd to be *Superſtition.* And that the ſame Charge might not be repeated, I judg'd it neceſſary to ſhew thus particularly from the plain and expreſs Words of Scripture, that this is no other Superſtition than what was taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles. It is indeed to be greatly lamented, that in a Chriſtian Country there ſhould be any need to prove, that the Work of our Redemption by the Death of Chriſt, with the Benefits thereby obtain'd for us, is a fundamental Doctrine of the Chriſtian Faith. But when we ſee ſo much pains taken to repreſent theſe things as Corruptions in Religion, We who have the care of Souls, can think no Pains too much to explain and inculcate thoſe great and neceſſary Truths, by ſhewing from the whole Tenor of the New Teſtament, that they are the Means which God himſelf hath appointed for the Salvation of Mankind.

The Excellence of the Chriſtian Inſtitution, join'd to the Evidences of its divine Authority as ſet forth in my former Letter, naturally leads,

VII. *To the great* Sinfulneſs and Danger *of rejecting it, or, in other Words, to the great Guilt and Perverſeneſs of* INFIDELITY. For tho' it is not in any Man's Power to believe what he pleaſes, becauſe as things appear at this or that time to his Underſtanding, ſo his Belief muſt be, and we can neither be charg'd with

Guilt, nor be liable to Puniſhment, for what we cannot help; yet in ſearching after Truth, there are two things which are in our power, 'The *Uſe* of our Faculties, and 'The *due* and *impartial* uſe of them; and if we fail of finding out the Truth, or fall into Error, by not uſing our Faculties at all, or by uſing them unduly, we are certainly accountable to God who gave them, and who as our Sovereign Lord has a right to require a due uſe and to puniſh the Abuſe of them. In ſpeculative Matters, which no way concern our Duty or Happineſs, Men may be as ignorant as they pleaſe without Danger of Guilt; but to be an Infidel in *Religion* thro' Sloth and Careleſſneſs, for want of examining at all, or thro' a ſlight and ſuperficial Examination, makes Men highly guilty in the ſight of God; both as it is a neglect of uſing and applying the Faculties he has given us, and as it is manifeſtly contrary to all the Rules of right Reaſon, not to uſe them in a matter which ſo nearly concerns our Safety and Intereſt; eſpecially, when the Evidences of Chriſtianity lie ſo open to the general Apprehenſion of Mankind, and may ſo eaſily be enter'd into and underſtood.

Letter 1ſt, p. 21, &c.

No leſs guilty are they in the ſight of God, who in examining the Grounds of Religion, ſuffer their Minds to be influenc'd by vicious Inclinations, or by Pride and an Affectation of Singularity, or by any immoral and indirect Motive whatſoever. It is every Day's Experience and Obſervation, how greatly the Judgments of Men are influenc'd in temporal Matters by their own private Convenience, and Intereſt, and other Conſiderations

ons, which do not at all belong to the Matter they are to judge of; and this may be much more ſuſpected in the Judgment they make of the Truth of Chriſtianity, conſidering how contrary its Precepts are to the inordinate Deſires and Inclinations of Nature. We cannot enter into the Hearts of Men, to ſee upon what Motives they act, and under what Influences they reaſon; but when we conſider the Strength and Clearneſs of the Evidences of Chriſtianity, with the Advantages and Excellencies of the Goſpel-Inſtitution, and the ſtrict Reſtraints it lays upon Exceſs and Uncleanneſs of all Kinds, we cannot but ſee that it requires the greateſt Degree of Charity, to aſcribe their Infidelity to any thing, but the Love of Vice, or the Love of Contradiction. This is what the Apoſtle calls *an evil* Heart *of Unbelief*; and where that is the Caſe, Infidelity is a Sin of the higheſt Nature; 'As it corrupts the Reaſon and Underſtanding which God has given, and ſubjects it to baſe and unworthy Influences; 'As it degrades human Nature, and carries in it an *Indifference* whether we be immortal or die like Beaſts, or rather a *Deſire* that we may die like them; 'As it is an Affront to God, in rejecting his Meſſengers, who come with clear and evident Teſtimonies of their being ſent by him; 'As it makes him a Liar, and is a manifeſt Contempt of his Goodneſs in ſending a Revelation, and defeats his gracious Deſigns and Meaſures for the Salvation of Mankind. Well, therefore, might our Saviour denounce Damnation againſt all thoſe who did not receive Him and his Doctrine: *He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not*, (*i. e.* disbelieveth) *ſhall be* damned. *If ye believe not that I am He, ye ſhall die in*

Heb. 3. 12.

Mark 16 16.

Joh. 8. 24.

Joh. 3. 18, 19. *your Sins. He that believeth not, is* condemn'd *already, becauſe he hath not believ'd in the Name of the only begotten Son of God; And this is the* Condemnation, *that Light is come into the World, and Men lov'd Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds were evil.*

Joh. 15. 22. *If I had not come and ſpoken unto them, they had not had Sin, but now they have no Cloak for their Sin.* And agreeable to theſe are the

Rev. 21. 8. Declarations of his Apoſtles. St. *John* reckons the *Unbelievers* among thoſe *who ſhall have their Portion in the Lake that burneth with*

2 Theſ. 1. 8. *Fire and Brimſtone. St.* Paul *tells us, that God will take Vengeance on them that know him not, and that obey not the Goſpel of our*

Heb. 2. 3. *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; and the Author to the *Hebrews, How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great* Salvation, *which at the firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him: God alſo bearing them Witneſs both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Giſts of the Holy*

Heb. 10. 28. 29. *Ghoſt?* And, *He that deſpis'd* Moſes's *Law, died without Mercy --- Of how much ſorer Puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath troden under Foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy Thing, and hath done deſpight to the Spirit of*

Joh. 3. 36. *Grace?* Agreeably to what *John* the Baptiſt had declared to the *Jews, He that believeth not the Son ſhall not ſee Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.*

I mention theſe Things, to ſhow the Infidels of our Age, that to believe or not-believe is far from being a Matter of Indifference, as they would

would make it; and to convince thoſe who are in Danger of being ſeduced by them, how nearly they are concern'd, before they give up themſelves to ſuch Guides, to give the Evidences of Chriſtianity a thorow and impartial Examination. For which End, I recommend to them the three following Teſts of Sincerity, 1. That they find their Hearts ſincerely diſpos'd to embrace any Doctrine, and follow any Rule of Life, that ſhall appear to come from God. 2. That they inwardly *wiſh* to find a Religion well-founded, which provides a Remedy for the Corruptions of our Nature, and enſures to good Men a State of Happineſs and Immortality after this Life. 3. That they find in themſelves no Luſt, or other Vice or Paſſion, which inclines them to *wiſh* that ſuch a Religion may *not* be well founded. Let but Men, before they enter upon their Examination, put the Heart under theſe Guards, and I am firmly perſwaded there is not the leaſt Danger that Infidelity will ever take hold of it.

But how great ſoever the Guilt of Infidelity may be, a Zeal to *Promote* it is ſtill greater; as carrying in it not only all the Aggravations that attend the Disbelief of a Revelation from God, but alſo great Injuſtice and Uncharitableneſs towards Men. He who endeavours to bring others to a Belief of Chriſtianity, approves himſelf to be a Lover of Mankind, in ſhewing them the Way to an Eternity of Happineſs, and abridging them only of ſuch Enjoyments as would be evidently injurious to their Bodies and Eſtates, and by making their Minds eaſy and quiet, in a comfortable Aſſurance that in all Events they are ſafe. But the Infidel, while he indulges Men in Enjoyments which the Goſpel forbids, cannot *aſſure* them that there are *not* Rewards and Puniſhments in another

another World, which will be beſtow'd and inflicted by the Rules that the Goſpel lays down. And as in all Caſes, to endeavour to perſwade Men out of the Belief of Things which for ought we know *may* be true, is unfair; ſo to do this in Matters which nearly concern their Welfare and Intereſt, is *unjuſt*. Nor is it only unjuſt, but alſo very *uncharitable*, to endeavour to deprive Men of a Belief, upon which the Comfort and Happineſs of their Lives depends; unleſs ſuch Belief were attended with ſome great Calamity or Miſery in other Reſpects. And further, it is both unjuſt and uncharitable to *Society* and *Government*, to endeavour to root out of the Minds of Men thoſe powerful Reſtraints from Wickedneſs and Violence, that Chriſtianity has laid them under; the Influences of which are a great Security to Peace and Order, and have their Effects in innumerable Caſes that human Laws cannot reach. Add to this, that the higheſt Security that Men can give to one another, is an Oath; which in Chriſtian Countries is taken upon the Holy Goſpels. And as the Obligation of the Oath ſo taken is underſtood to ariſe from a Belief of the *Truth* of thoſe Goſpels, and of the Threatnings and Judgments denounc'd by them, one cannot well conceive how it ſhould take hold of the Conſcience of an Infidel. So that the Promoters of Infidelity, who ſo evidently weaken if not deſtroy the Bonds of Society and Government, may well be look'd upon as publick Enemies to Mankind.

'Tis true indeed, in exchange for the Comforts and Advantages they take away from private Perſons and publick Societies, they promiſe a quiet and uninterrupted Enjoyment of Pleaſures which the Chriſtian Religion forbids; but in this too they

they are unjuſt, in that they promiſe what they know they are not able to perform. The utmoſt Progreſs they can ordinarily hope for in promoting Infidelity, is to perſwade Men that the Goſpel Revelation which contains ſuch terrible Threatnings againſt Luſt and Uncleanneſs of all Kinds, is *not* certainly true; but while they pretend not, to prove that it is certainly *not true*, they cannot free a Courſe of Voluptuouſneſs from great Mixtures of Doubts and Fears; and theſe are perpetually reviv'd and heighten'd, by ſeeing ſuch Numbers of wiſe and good Men embrace the Chriſtian Faith, and act upon it; giving in their Lives a daily Teſtimony of their firm Belief of the Truth of it. For tho' this is not a direct Proof that the Goſpel is true, it is a great Preſumption that there is a *Strength* in the Evidences of the Truth of it, which their Luſts and Paſſions will not let them ſee; and, at the ſame Time, it is a daily Warning to them, that the Contempt of it is too great a Hazard for a wiſe Man to run; a Warning, that the moſt hardened Infidel, in his thoughtful Hours, and in the Time of Sickneſs, Danger, or Diſtreſs, is not able to reſiſt.

THE Evidences of the Chriſtian Religion are compris'd under two general Heads, *External* and *Internal*. The External Evidences are thoſe which prove it to be of divine Authority, as, 'The fulfilling of ancient Prophecies in Chriſt, 'The general Expectation of the Meſſiah at that Time, 'The Miracles wrought by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, 'His foretelling many Things which punctually came to paſs, and, 'The wonderful Propagation of the Goſpel after his Death. The Internal Evidences are, 'The Need there was of a Revelation from

from God to inſtruct and reform Mankind, 'The Fitneſs of the Goſpel Revelation for that end, 'The Excellence of the Doctrins contain'd in it, and, 'The viſible Tendency of the whole to the Improvement and Perfection of human Nature and the Happineſs of Mankind, in this World and the next.

In this and my former Letter, I have laid before you the Evidences of both Sorts, to guard you againſt all the Attacks of Infidels, and to keep you ſtedfaſt in the Chriſtian Faith; and I beſeech you ſeriouſly to peruſe what I have written for your Uſe, and to weigh the ſeveral Parts of it with Attention and Impartiality, as Matters of the utmoſt Conſequence to you, and more eſpecially neceſſary to be attended to in theſe Days, when the Cauſe of Infidelity is ſo openly eſpous'd, and the Advocates for it are ſo induſtrious to gain Proſelytes. And that God will be pleas'd to give a Bleſſing to theſe Endeavours for your ſpiritual Good, and diſpoſe your Hearts to attend to the Means of your Salvation, and aſſiſt you in your Enquiries after the true Way to it, is, and ſhall be, the hearty Prayer of

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Your faithful Friend, and Paſtor,

Edm.' London'.